THE UN-CHURCHED: WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY REALLY NEED

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ABSTRACT

THE UN-CHURCHED: WHO THEY ARE
AND WHAT THEY
REALLY NEED

by
Stephanie A. Wilson
United Theological Seminary, 2015

Mentors

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This study seeks to understand the culture of the un-churched by exploring the subjective meanings they attribute to their spiritual practices and experiences. At the time of the fieldwork the researcher had been un-churched for over three years. As the un-churched demographic continues to grow, their reasons for severing ties with their local churches are explored. The hypothesis espouses that interacting with the un-churched will provide insights into ways to spiritually engage them. Fifteen un-churched women were interviewed for this qualitative, ethnographic study. Interviews are included, and patterns and themes discussed.

DEDICATION

Thank you to the many individuals who were willing to have this conversation. Surprisingly, conversations sprang up in airports, hotels, restaurants, and within local communities. Special thanks to those who took the time to participate in this study by sharing their intimate spiritual journeys.

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Awakenings begin in periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when we lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions, and in the authority of our leaders in church and state.

–W. McLoughlin

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are compared to organisms because they are made up of people who are constantly changing. When creating an organization, structures in the form of rules, regulations, policies, processes, and procedures have to be created as well. The form of these structures depends on the type of organization, its administrative needs, its mission, and goals. In short, organizations can get very complex very quickly with public, private, nonprofit, charitable, educational, and religious institutions all qualifying. The administrative arm of the church functions as one such organization and shares many of these structural components.

Churches have policies, procedures, rituals and traditions. They even have their own professional development programs of discipleship. When forced to undertake change, the Church has a restricted toolbox of possible options when compared to other organizations. The cadre of choices offered to other types of organizations, are not available to the Church. The church may not change its vision, nor may it opt for a new mission statement, nor may it make the choice to pursue a different customer base. The Church's unwavering vision seeks the reconnection of humanity to God. Its only mission statement is to dispense the gospel of reconciliation, with its only customer base being a lost and dying world. Nor can the church disown its workforce, as God uses believers,

described as laborers in Luke 10:2, to accomplish these goals.[1] In this scripture Christ says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." It is the premise of this project that the kingdom labor force is fragmented and that this is problematic for organizational success.

This research defines organizations as, "a consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals."[2] Organizational Behavior studies individuals and groups within an organizational context. It looks at the internal processes and practices that influences the effectiveness of individuals, teams and organizations.[3] When applied to the organizational structure of churches, this field of study effectively analyzes the church's internal culture, with culture defined by cultural anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[4]

In addressing the internal culture of churches, congregation scholar Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney note that parishioners take satisfaction in separating themselves from the world, putting boundaries into place to set them apart and then celebrating those boundaries within their

---

[1] Luke 10:2, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is taken from the NRSV of the Bible.

[2] Stephen P. Robbins, *Organizational Behavior,* 10th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), 4.

[3] Don Hellriegel and John Slocum, Jr. *Organizational Behavior,* 11th ed. (Mason:Thomson Corporation, 2007), 5.

[4] Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Cultures: Researches into.the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom* (New York, NY: Gordon Press, 1871), 1.

communities.[5] Ammerman et al., continues "they offer their members as many alternatives to the outside culture as possible, and they absorb large amounts of their members' available time, often minimizing differences in the backgrounds people bring into the congregation."[6]

Chapter One identifies the location, and context of the study. It goes on to describe the nexus between the researcher and her context. The chapter concludes by describing the synergy that colluded to ultimately birth this unique ministry project.

Chapter Two discusses the past and present status of the un-churched. There have always been those who have chosen to not take part in the activities of the traditional church or synagogue environments. The chapter provides an in-depth, historical look at this demographic and attempts to gain insights into this phenomenon.

Chapter Three contains the three foundational pillars that have been put in place to undergird this study: biblical research, theological research, and historical research. The biblical research provides an exegetical breakdown of both Old and New Testament passages of the bible. A biblical exegesis systematically analyzes the process by which a person arrives at a reasonable and coherent sense of the meaning and message of a biblical passage. It allows the researcher to analyze the relationship between the un-churched and certain biblical passages, using the latter to provide insight into the former. The theological research brings into focus the perspective of Natural Theology which is used to identify a set of beliefs better suited to the lifestyle of the un-churched. The historical research looks at the Jesus People Movement of the 1960's and 1970's, and

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[5] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1998), 81.

[6] Ibid.

examines the circumstances behind the un-churched movement of the past, comparing it to the similar phenomenon observed today. Scripture passages are presented in a three columned table to provide the reader a comparison of different bible versions.

Chapter Four describes the methodology used to implement the research. It includes the hypothesis, research questions, as well as the interview questionnaire used to probe the context. In addition, the chapter discusses the coding used to analyze the data. Field notes collected throughout this project will be disbursed as appropriate throughout this ethnographic research. They reflect insights about the culture of the un-churched integral to the ethnographic research style.

Chapter Five, the field experience, provides in-depth information about the fifteen interviews that were conducted. The study presents these findings in a narrative format that is derived directly from the interviews. The chapter also considers the development of the codes and themes used to analyze and discuss the findings.

Chapter Six provides the reflection, summary and conclusion of the research. It provides an opportunity to be reflective of the implementation while discussing noted themes and trends found in the data.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Autobiography

Attending the local parochial school exposed the researcher to the many rituals and traditions of the Catholic Church. The researcher's family was one of the only African-American families to attend the local parochial; all of her neighborhood friends attended the nearby public school. As her First Communion and then Confirmation came and went, there was no real connection to anything spiritual. Being exposed to the numerous rites and rituals produced no understanding. The researcher recalls that each school day opened with the pledge of allegiance and prayer, in that order. As she prepared to graduate and go on to high school, she made the decision to exit the parochial school system. She never made her parents aware of the scholarship the school offered her to attend the local Catholic High School, choosing to join her neighborhood friends at the local public high school instead.

In his book "The Substance of Things Hoped for," Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor discusses the revelation of his unique spiritual place within his own generational history,

and how this discovery led to his understanding of, and dedication to, fulfilling his life's purpose. [1] It was this great revelation – along with his many small acts of faith and kindness – that allowed Dr. Proctor to be a source of spiritual encouragement in the many lives he touched. The writing of this spiritual autobiography similarly granted the researcher the opportunity to discover and appreciate her own distinct place within her generational history. It called for a great deal of reflection on the past, which allowed for a greater understanding of the present, and a clearer view of the future.

Due to her youth at the time the researcher could not participate in the Civil Rights Movement when it emerged. She could read and listen, however, and she actively did both. The words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. filled her with awe as she felt the strength of his convictions and knew within herself that he spoke the truth. She noticed that her mother--a woman who was not easily impressed--felt the same way, which also encouraged her. These influences made a sizable impression on the young high school student, and their impact would be felt for years to come.

At about the age of thirty-seven, the researcher accepted the salvation of Jesus Christ. Having been raised Catholic, she had an awareness of Jesus Christ, but was never introduced to Him as she was then. She notes the excessively complicated and lengthy nature of this introduction. The Sisters of Mercy at Saint Peter's School could have made this step clearer during her eight years there. The researcher can distinctly remember the mythical stories about the baby Jesus transforming into real, applicable truth. She should have seen this connection long ago. Her Catholic upbringing had given her all of the

[1] Samuel DeWitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999).

pieces – the catechism lessons, the Stations of the Cross, Easter Sunday, and more – but the rituals made sense now. Everything fell into place for her during this magical time.

Many years later, having matured into a leadership position in her local church, the researcher began to realize that the personal dialog between believers and God was confusing, Instead of engaging God directly, the partners of her church kept looking to the pastor to tell them about God, and relied on him to identify their gifts and talents. They looking to a man to tell them what God said, and what it meant. They also held that man responsible for their personal and corporate development.

She noticed that rather than share the good news of the gospel, they instead isolated themselves. They busied themselves deciding who could come and be introduced to God, and who needed to clean themselves up beforehand. There have always been people with whom the church has refused to share the good news, she realized. God intended for the Blood of Christ to be accessible to the leper, the homosexual, the Samaritan woman, and the terrorist. As such the researcher found this "our way or the highway," attitude of her church to be new and very unsettling. Ironically her church practiced the ministry of Christ with exclusivity, while selling and teaching its inclusive nature to the new Christian. The researcher's leadership role as the Dean of the Bible Institute positioned her to study and then teach the Old Testament for a number of years. She discovered that under the old covenant the heart of God towards Israel had always been proactive and inclusive of those outside of the nation of Israel. The new covenant ushered in by the death and resurrection of Christ, creates a better, holistic, and even more inclusive solution to the problem of sin.

That her church actively practiced exclusivity seemed strange to the researcher, given that the very same church had been instrumental in teaching her about the inclusiveness of the Gospel for the past fifteen years. It became clear that these individuals, who the researcher loved dearly, were more content to belong to a small exclusive group, than to fulfill the Great Commission by going out and talking to people. She came to appreciate the irony in the fact that she had cut herself off from the very population she had been called to engage.

In 2011 the researcher joined the ranks of the nearly 100 million un-churched individuals. She quietly resigned her leadership position and separated herself from the people with whom she had fellowshipped; it was not possible for her to stay. As she was leaving she can still remember hearing God ask "are you leaving me too?"

> *Field note 1:* Leaving her church left the researcher feeling overwhelmed and underwhelmed. Her heart seemed as though it would break. She wished she could just stay, relax, and ask Pastor Jeremy what he thought about the next project coming down the pike, however the belonging had slipped away. She knew these people in their own way loved her. They had served, cried, and rejoiced together. She had seen many of them mature and begin families. She had also learned about the Word of God, and the value of service. Her son, now twenty-eight years old, had also been nurtured there as well. The pressure to stay within the group felt tremendous!

Context of Ministry

The 2010 United States Census Bureau indicates that the population of Windham County is 118,428. The demographic breakdown of the County reflects that approximately 11,351 or 9.6% of the population are Hispanic or Latino; Blacks or

African Americans comprise 1,995 or 1.7%; and an overwhelming 101,138 or 85.4% are Caucasian. Asians make up 1.1% or 1,360; and American Indian and Alaska Natives are located at 0.4% (436) of the county's population. The 2010 census indicates that 2,148 or 1.8% of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders lived within the borders of Windham.[2]

The top three age demographics for Windham County are those in the forty-five through forty-nine groups, followed closely by the fifty through fifty-four year old age group. The fifteen through nineteen year olds comprise the third largest age within the County. The statistics associated with the above demographics are (9,786 or 8.3%), (9,639 or 8.1%), and (9,248 or 7.8%) respectively. Females represent 50.4% of the county, while males are 49.6%. The County is reflective of nearly 45,000 households. 22,420 or 50% of these households are made up of husband-wife families. 5,532 of the households or slightly higher than 12% are headed by females with no husband present; and 5.3% are headed by males who have no wife present.[3] Windham County is within two miles of the University of Connecticut (UConn), the State's land grant and sea grant institution which is located in Storrs, CT. In addition, the County houses Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), one of four universities that comprise the Connecticut State University System.

[2] United States Census Bureau, 2010 Demographic Profile Data. accessed November 10, 2012 factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml.

[3] Ibid.

Table 1. Profiles of Residents of Connecticut[4]
Connecticut State Size: 1,443,115

Male	Cat. %	US Cat. %
Un-churched	39	33
Practicing Christians	32	41
Female		
Un-churched	33	26
Practicing Christians	40	52
Age: Under 40		
Un-churched	47	35
Practicing Christians	26	37
Age: 40+		
Un-churched	31	27
Practicing Christian	40	52
Married		
Un-churched	31	25
Practicing Christian	35	53
Ethnicity: White		
Un-churched	34	30
Practicing Christian	34	47

[4] Barna Research Group, *Barna Reports, States: A Profile of Residents of Connecticut,* 2011 Edition.

Ethnicity: Non White		
Un-churched	38	29
Practicing Christian	42	48
Registered Republicans		
Un-churched	39	19
Practicing Christian	47	60
Registered Democrats		
Un-churched	32	29
Practicing Christian	42	48

Category %: Percent refers to the proportion of the demographic group who fits a given characteristic. For example CT is described as having 39% Un-churched males. This refers to the entire male population of the state: 39% of the men in this market are un-churched compared to 33% of all men nationally.

US %: This percent provides an estimate of the national norm, among either U.S. population or households.

Table 2. Population by Percentage

House Church Activity	Pop. %	US %
Participated in past month	8	10
Ever Participate	11	17

Population%: Percent refers to the proportion of population in that market. This column tells you the percent of adults in this market with that particular characteristic. For example, Eight percent of CT's population has participated in house church activities in the past month. This means that 8 out of every 100 residents in the market could be described in this way.

Windham has four metropolitan areas within the county: Willimantic, Windham Center, South Windham, and North Windham. North Windham County lies

approximately 28 miles ENE of the capital city of Hartford; 47 miles NW of Providence, RI; 96 miles SW of Boston, and 130 miles NE of New York.[5] Jazzercise is a national exercise franchise. The North Windham Jazzercise Studio is located in the county of North Windham, Connecticut. About seventy-five women regularly participate in this group exercise program. The Studio offers a total of eighteen weekly classes; although most members attend three to five classes each week. The researcher is a member and actively exercises here three to four times each week.

The Barna Research Group has been tracking America's religious behavior and beliefs since 1984. Their research reflects that, "The number of people in the United States who are not born-again Christians is about 180 to 190 million people. If that group were a nation unto itself, it would be the fourth most populated nation on the planet behind only China, India and Indonesia!"[6] Barna estimates that in the year 2000 the number of Americans, of all types who were un-churched was nearly 100 million. They define a person as, un-churched if, "he or she has not attended a Christian church service at any time during the last six months other than special events such as weddings and funerals."[7] Likewise Gallup and Lindsay define the un-churched as those replying "no" to either one or both of the following questions: "Do you happen to be a member of a church, synagogue, or mosque," and "Apart from weddings, funerals, or special holidays,

[5] Town of Windham, Connecticut, accessed November 10, 2012, www.windhamct.com/about_demo.htm?m=about.

[6] George Barna, *Growing Your Church from the Outside In: Understanding the Unchurched and How to Reach Them* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002), 22.

[7] Ibid., 23.

such as Christmas, Easter or Yom Kippur, have you attended the church, synagogue, or mosque of your choice in the last six months, or not?"[8]

> *Field note 2*: Amber says that being un-churched after the divorce "took away a very important aspect of my life. My faith has always been my primary purpose and an essential aspect of my personality … I wandered for a long time, but feel that I am ultimately in a better place. I'm open to new ideas and have expanded my definition of faith."

Transformational Synergy

Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. has been considered by many in America to be church hour. Interestingly enough the Sunday morning 10:00 a.m. Jazzercise class sees the most participants of the week. While only five to ten women attend a typical class, about twenty-five to thirty women jam themselves onto the dance floor on any given Sunday morning. The impetus for this study came on such a Sunday in December, 2012. The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting occurred just two days prior, the incident weighed heavily on our hearts and minds. A conspicuous silence dominated the normally bustling room of nearly thirty women. Sadness permeated the dance floor affecting everyone present. Someone suggested we pray, and doing so brought a much needed light into that bleak December morning. Several spiritual discussions developed from those bonding moments, leading the researcher to ask why so many of the women present went to Jazzercise on Sunday mornings instead of going to church. These timely discussions

[8] George Gallup Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U.S. Beliefs (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999),* 95.

have opened the door for ten women to identify themselves as un-churched. These women agreed to be interviewed as a part of this research.

A small spiritual discussion group began meeting in May of 2012 and also provided synergy for this research. The group, with whom the researcher accepted an invitation to take part, consists of four women from diverse spiritual backgrounds and cultures. The group provides a practical application for this thesis, and allows for the blending of theory and practice. This unique synergy has been priceless to the researcher who has developed spiritual and communal ties to these women.

The researcher uncovered additional synergy in *The Path, by* Laurie Beth Jones. This text encouraged her to develop a personal mission statement. Jones asserts that a mission statement is unique to the individual and that, "you must, at least temporarily, dissociate yourself from the influence of those around you; least you become a mere follower.[9] A ditto head is a character that has big ears but no eyes. Jones cautions us to, preserve our own set of eyes. In a step-by-step process Jones helps the reader to create a personal mission statement. The researcher locates her personal mission as that of being, *An Effective Ambassador for Jesus Christ.* An Ambassador is defined as, "an accredited diplomat sent by a nation on a mission to, or as its permanent representative in, a foreign country," or as, "a representative or promoter of a specific thing *(i.e. an ambassador of peace).*"[10] Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that, we are ambassadors for Christ. In this role we are to implore people on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God. Throughout the ministry of Christ we see this Ambassadorship being modeled. Christ spent a great deal

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[9] Laurie Beth Jones, *The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and for Life* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 1996), 17.

[10] *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "Ambassador."*

of time talking to people who did not think like Him. These people included the Pharisees, the Sadducees, gentiles, Samaritans; those in government, and even His own disciples. Not many, if any, thought like Christ! That did not keep Him from Kingdom concerns. When addressing the issues facing the African American dream of equality, the writer Langston Hughes reflects on Proverbs 13:12 when he poses the question:

> What happens to a dream deferred?
>
> Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
> Or fester like a sore – and then run?
> Does it stink like rotten meat?
> Or crust and sugar over—
> Like a syrupy sweet?
>
> Maybe it just sags
> Like a heavy load.
>
> Or does it explode?[11]

> *Field note 3:* The researcher has begun to talk to people about her project and about spirituality. Most are very receptive and openly interested. Conversations were struck up in airports, at breakfast tables, and in hotel lobbies! The Professional and Context Associates are having conversations as well and are engaging the researcher in feedback for their conversations. Surprisingly these conversations have proven to be more authentic and engaging than any she had been involved in during her years in the local church.

[11] Gunnar Bengtsson, "Dream Deferred." *American Poems, a*ccessed November 14, 2012, www.americanpoems.com/poets/Langston-Hughes/2381.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART OF THE UN-CHURCHED

Christian Sunday schools throughout the nation teach children that God talks to individuals, and that on some level they should expect God to direct them individually. Throughout the bible one notices the one-on-one interactions that God has with humanity. Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, and who could forget the individual call on the lives of the prophets. One would really need to have heard directly from God to be a prophet to the nation of Israel. In the New Testament we are introduced to John the Baptist who had the same intense and direct relationship with God. Further on in the New Testament Saul experiences the same personal encounter with God on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Interestingly, the entire Book of Revelation is a one-on-one, personal experience that the disciple John had with God, while being exiled on the Isle of Patmos. These interactions have prompted the researcher to conclude that in the 21st century we can expect the same direct and undiluted relationship with God.

Something unique happens when humans encounter God directly. From an observational and experiential perspective, the interaction leaves many of us feeling

beloved and uniquely special. Helping us to feel special seems to be one of the basic utensils in God's pallet of skills. That God can make each of us feel special is a distinction unique to the nature of the Divine, not an indication of our uniqueness.

History shows that it is difficult to be unimpressed after having an encounter with God. Once God is encountered, for most, there seems to be a profound need to tell someone. Expressions of these encounters can be seen in classics like the Sistine Chapel, C.S. Lewis' Narnia Series, and the efforts made by people like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. These individual were impacted by their encounter with God. In many cases when one has such a profound encounter it is perceived as unique. It is then easy to assume that such an experience is so profound that it should apply to everyone, and that others cannot be directly experiencing the same depth of experience. Our experiences are intimate because God is intimate. After such an intimate encounter, people go on to create a template or denomination to explain their encounter believing that it is unique. These encounters inspire individuals to establish particular ways to reach God that are specific to our own experiences. We go on to expect that others should experience and interpret their experiences with God in the same way that we do.

When inspecting the patterns of religious nonbelief and non-belonging Baker and Smith express that even the terminology used to describe those in these groups are problematic. He notes that, "the diversity among "nonreligious" individuals is readily apparent in the absences of a concise and accurate term that encompasses all experiences in such a broad categorization."[1] He goes on to point out that, "we find people who

[1] Joseph Baker and Buster Smith, "None Too Simple: Examining Issues of Religious Nonbelief and Nonbelonging in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 4 (December 2009): 719-733, accessed June 6, 2014, EBSCO*host*.

believe without belonging, people who do not believe but continue to claim an identity with a religious tradition, and people who neither believe nor belong."[2]

Individuals who are not traditionally religious find themselves in one of three categories. They are atheists, agnostics, or un-churched. These categories represent distinct philosophical positions accompanied by distinct attitudes toward religion, both public and private. Atheists are those who believe God does not exist. Agnostics believe that our limited human capacity makes access, knowledge, and communication with God unattainable, maybe even impossible. Given their philosophical and attitudinal position neither atheists nor agnostics have a need to attend a church or synagogue.

The un-churched represent the third category of those not traditionally religious. While they claim no religious affiliation they do believe in God, or a higher power. These people claim "no religion" because of concerns with denominational practices and doctrines. Only 12% of un-churched people did not attend church because they do not believe in God. While many in the church have assumed that the un-churched have rejected God and faith, this does not seem to be true. Charles Dickson notes that, "many claimed to be open to spiritual things, but have closed themselves to institutional expressions of spirituality."[3] Dickson concludes, "for the most part, it is not God they have rejected, it is the Church."[4]

---

[2] Baker and Smith, *None Too Simple*.

[3] Charles Dickson, "Listening to the Unchurched," *Priest* 70, no. 5 (May 2014): 13-14, accessed June 5, 2014, EBSCO*host*.

[4] Ibid.

Demographic is defined as, "the study of changes that occur in large groups of people over a period of time."[5] The un-churched are a complex demographic for many reasons. Barna Research Group indicates that the group is inclusive of the young and the old, male and female, the disenfranchised, the educated, the influential, and the affluent. The complexity and size of this demographic suggests that mechanisms to engage them may be equally complex. It does not seem wise or logical to lump such a diverse group under the singular label of "un-churched." Institutions that are in the business of categorizing and labeling this group have not only mislabeled them but have identified them by who and what they are not. Instead of locating and appreciating this group for its diversity, studies have only focused on the commonality of this demographic, that they are un-churched.

Throughout history religion and spirituality have been an important part of the human experience. Clifford Geertz describes religion as a, "(1) System of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these concepts with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[6] There have always been individuals who have disassociated from the synagogues and churches of their time. They have been classified by a variety of names, and analyzed in a number of clever ways. Referring to them as the "religious nones" Glenn Vernon acknowledges the diversity within this demographic. He refers to the "nones" as a neglected category included in research designs only to ensure that

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[5] *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "Demographic."*

[6] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), 90.

percentages total one hundred, not because they were seen as a group needing to be studied.[7] It has been implied that because they do not attend church, that they have no spiritual life worthy of study. Vernon makes the point that the label "none" provides, "a negative definition, specifying what a phenomenon is not, rather than what it is . . . intentionally or not, such a use implies that only those affiliated with a formal group are religious."[8]

Robert Fuller refers to these individuals as being *spiritual, but not religious,* and notes that roughly half of all un-churched individuals, or one in every five persons, identifies with this marker. Through most of the twentieth century the terms "religious" and "spiritual" have been used interchangeably. It was not until the last two decades of that century that the word *spiritual* became allied with the private realm of thought and experience. Around that same time, the word *religious* became associated with experiences in the public realm. These experiences are inclusive of the adherence to church rituals and denominational terminology and doctrine. Individuals who identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" discard the public realm of religion in favor of the private realm of thought and experience. Most dismiss the idea that traditional religion has any value in furthering their spiritual growth. Traditional religion for them becomes somewhat of a hand-me-down, or cast-off of what they see as the true private realm of spirituality.[9]

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[7] Glenn M. Vernon, "The Religious "Nones": A Neglected Category," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7, no. 2 (Autumn 1968): 219-229.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Mysticism

Ken Vincent describes a mystical religious experience as, "the very personal, direct experience of God when the barriers between the human being and God's Universe dissolve."[10] Mysticism is considered first-hand religion. Of this direct experience with God Hopkinson notes that, "There is nothing second-hand about it. The mystic's approach to God is a direct approach, not dependent on other people or on external circumstances, but a matter between the soul and God alone."[11]

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* William James defines religion as, "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[12] Using observation and case studies he completed early research on the religious visions and mystical experiences regular individuals were having. James proposes that the four marks of a mystical experience are ineffability, noetic, transience, and passivity. The mark of ineffability defies expression and lacks transferability. Its quality must be directly experienced. The noetic mark brings an impartation of knowledge not acquired through the intellect, but by way of impartation. "They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance."[13] The mark of transiency indicates that the experience is not sustained for long periods of time. Finally, the mark of passivity is experienced as the

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[10] Ken R. Vincent, *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 39.

[11] Arthur W. Hopkinson, *Mysticism: Old and New* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikal Press, 1971), 27-28.

[12] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin Inc.1982), 31.

[13] Ibid, 380-381.

feeling that his or her will is being held at bay, and that a superior power is being experienced. James placed experience at the center of psychology and explored religion in experiential terms. He concluded that positive forms of religious experiences produced, in some individuals, genuine positive physical results.

James proposes that the center of personal religion is in mystical states of consciousness. He separates religion into categories identified as institutional religion and personal religion. Institutional religion is, "worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization."[14] Personal religion is the "inner disposition of man himself which form the centre of interest, his conscience, his deserts, his helplessness, his incompleteness. . . . the acts to which this sort of religion prompts are personal not ritual acts, the individual transacts the business by himself alone, and the ecclesiastical organization, with its priests and sacraments and other go-betweens, sinks to an altogether secondary place."[15]

In 1969 Alister Hardy completed a large scale survey that explored the mystical experiences individuals were having. Hardy made a generic written appeal through newspapers and pamphlets and asked, "*have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it 'God' or not, which is different from your everyday self?"* Individuals were invited to send in their responses. In 1980 Hardy published his results based on the first 3,000 responses. His research has provided, "a better knowledge of the different kinds of spiritual feelings as experienced by the public at large based upon the examination of several thousand examples and secondly, by

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[14] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 30.

[15] Ibid.

examining those of particular kinds in depth, to learn more about the nature of such experiences."[16]

In 1977 Hay and Morisy studied a random sample of 1,865 British individuals. They used the same question Hardy posed. Thirty-five percent of the individuals surveyed responded "yes."[17] A British Gallup Poll again repeated the Hardy question in 1987, and received a 48% response rate of "yes."[18] Greely then asked 1,467 Americans, "*have you ever, felt as though you were very close to a powerful, spiritual force that seemed to lift you out of yourself?"* Thirty-five percent responded "yes." [19] Results of the Greeley research are referred to in Figure 1 and Figure 2. The graphs note the various triggers, and the durations of mystical experiences.

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[16] Alistar Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 22.

[17] David Hay and Ann Morisy, "Reports of Ecstatic, Paranormal, or Religious Experience in Great Britain and the United States: A Comparison of Trends," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17, no. 3 (September 1, 1978): 255-268, accessed October 10, 2014, EBSCO*host*.

[18] Vincent, *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation*, 43.

[19] Ibid., 142.

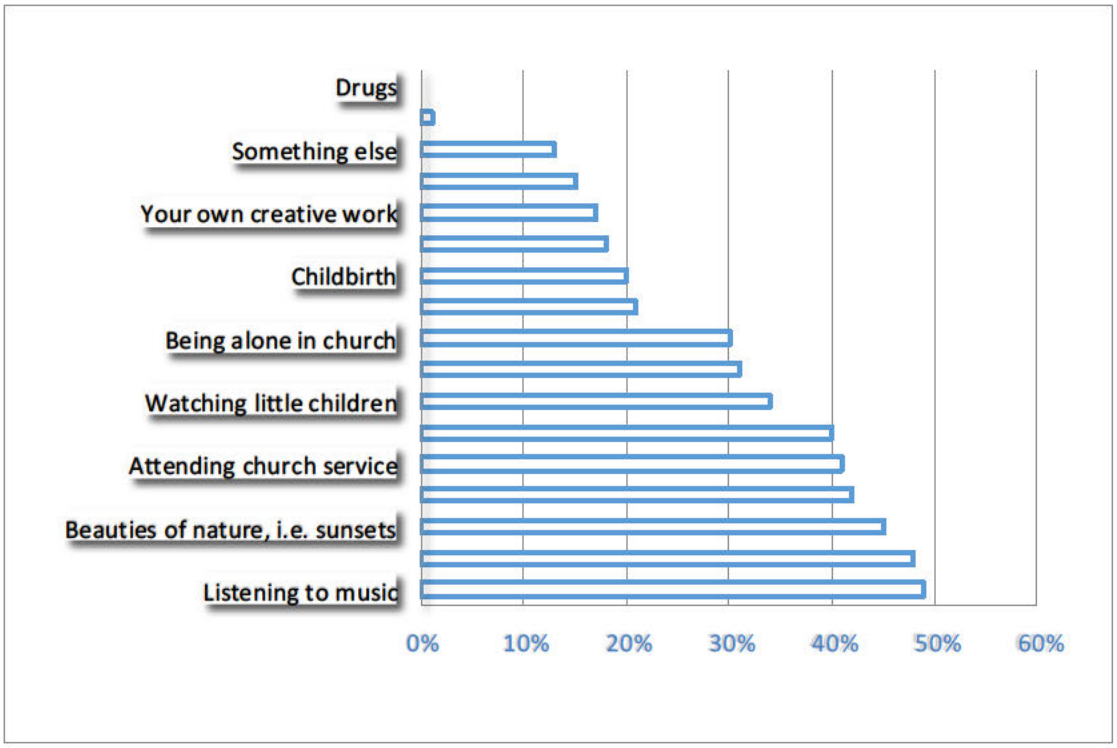

Figure 1. Triggers of Mystical Experiences. [20]

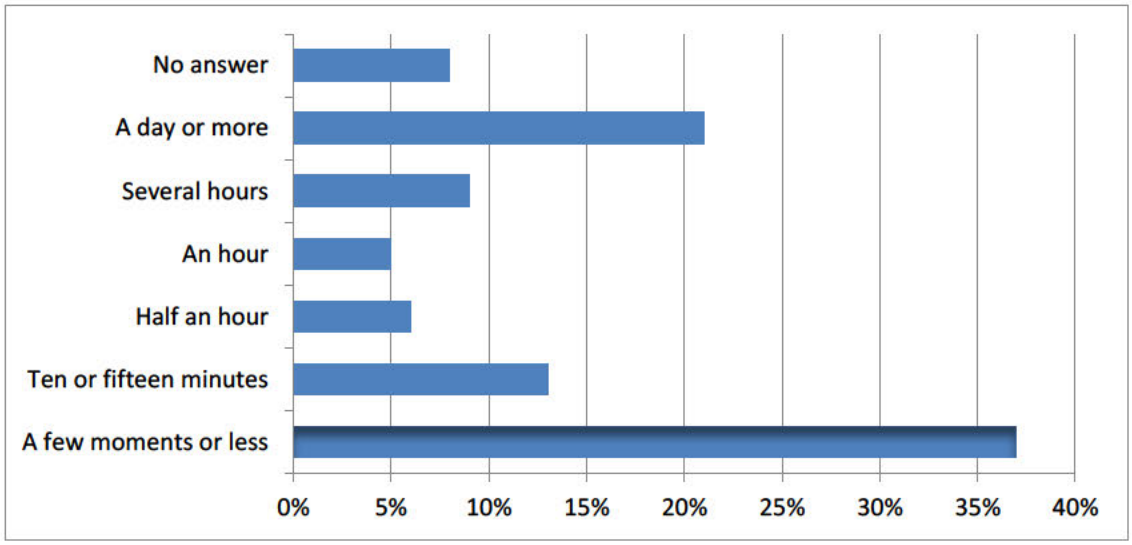

Figure 2. Duration of Mystical Experiences. [21]

[20] Andrew M. Greeley, *Ecstasy: A Way of Knowing* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 141.

[21] Ibid., 142.

Vincent further documents the mystical experiences of everyday people. He reports that when Americans were recently surveyed with the question, *in general, how often would you say you had experienced God's presence or a spiritual force that felt very close to you,* 86% reported that this had happened to them one or more times.[22] In the intervening years it has been documented that the number of individuals responding affirmatively to this question varies from 35% to 50%.[23] These studies validate that everyday human mystical experiences with God are not unique or atypical. They demonstrate that God is consistently being experienced outside of traditional institutional church environments. "In 1984, just over half of the nation (56%) felt the need to experience spiritual growth and development. By 1998 that number had leapt an unprecedented twenty-six percentage points. Eighty-two percent of adults now feel the need to grow and mature spiritually."[24]

National Demographic Descriptors

Gallup and Lindsay in table 3 indicate that men are more likely to be un-churched than women – about half of men (50%), as opposed to 39% of women. Americans sixty-five and older are less likely than those under sixty-five to be un-churched. In addition, conservatives are the least likely political group to be un-churched, followed by

[22] Vincent, *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation,* 44.

[23] Ibid., 43.

[24] Gallup and Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape*, 66.

Moderates and Liberals. Whites are more likely to be un-churched (45%) as opposed to (32%) of Blacks and those in the West are more likely at (52%).[25]

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Unchurched America[26]

National	44%
Male	50%
Female	39%
Whites	45%
Non-whites	37%
Blacks	32%
18-29 years	49%
30-49 years	44%
50-64 years	42%
65+	40%
East	47%
Midwest	41%
South	39%
West	52%
College	40%
High school or less	49%
Conservatives	35%
Moderates	47%
Liberals	55%
2001	47%
1998	44%
1988	44%
1978	41%

Field note 4: Carolyn, a member of the Monday night group is the only member who considers herself to be "churched." She attends church two or more times each month with her two daughters. Her husband, a Connecticut State Trooper, was a First Responder to the Sandy Hook School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. Carolyn's marriage and family continue to be a casualty of what he saw there. She and her two girls have moved out of their home. Even though she has sought assistance from her church, she does not feel that they are have been very helpful. As she inches her way towards the door to being un-churched, she probes the group with questions like, "how do you keep yourself motivated spiritually when you're un-churched?"

[25] Gallup and Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape*, 96.

[26] Ibid.

Ways of Doing Church

Doing church differently manifests through a diversity of models. The models attempted over the past twenty to thirty year range from:

- The Church Without Walls Model
- The Multi-site Church Model
- The Mega-church Model
- The Emerging Church

The Church without Walls model was popular in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Many congregations saw the value of eliminating building maintenance expenses, and have chosen instead to meet in existing pubs, libraries, and cafes. The Multi-site Church also presents a different church model. These congregations and more than 1,500 like them, developed across the country. They went beyond additional service times and larger buildings to introduce multiple venues and locations. "The approach of taking one church to multiple sites seems to be the beginning of a revolution in how church is done in North America and around the world."[27]

While mega churches account for only one-half of one percent of all religious congregations in the United States, the mega-church phenomenon is vibrant and growing.[28] Thumma and Travis indicate that there are approximately 1,250 mega-churches in the U.S. market, and that about fifty new mega-churches are being

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[27] Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006). (Kindle Electronic Edition, location 290).

[28] Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What we Can Learn from America's Largest Churches* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2017), 4.

established each year.[29] They further suggest that, "mega-churches, their practices, and their leaders are the most influential contemporary dynamic in American Religion."[30] Seeker-oriented mega-churches, like Saddleback in California and Willow Creek in Illinois, have grown rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s. They appeal to those individuals who remain outside of traditional faith congregations because they downplay denominational affiliation and traditional religious rituals. Instead, they rely on a modern look, a mall or college campus, and include music driven by drums and electric guitars. Interestingly enough, they use small groups throughout the week, to engage, connect, and poll potential and new members.[31]

Table 4. Megachurches by Denominational Affiliation[32]

Affiliation	Percentage
Nondenominational	35
Southern Baptist	16
Baptist (unspecified)	10
Assemblies of God	6
United Methodist	5
Calvary Chapel	4.4
Christian	4.2
Four Square	1.2

[29] Thumma and Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths*, 6.

[30] Ibid., 2.

[31] Marc von der Ruhr and Joseph P. Daniels, "Subsidizing Religious Participation Through Groups: A Model of the "Megachurch" Strategy for Growth," *Religious Research Associates*, 53 (2012):471-491.

[32] Thumma and Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths*, 27.

Church of Christ	1.0
Evangelical Lutheran Church	1.0
Vineyard Christian Fellowship	1.0

The Emerging Church Movement takes its name from the notion that as cultures change, new church models emerge in response to that shift. Robert Pope describes the emerging church as an attempt to, "distinguish a Christian community whose praxis is very different from that which is ordinarily associated with the church giving rise to a comparison between that which is emerging and that which is 'institutional', 'traditional' or 'inherited.' "[33] Pope also points out that while these churches share certain characteristics, they are manifested in diverse ways. He maintains that, "there is no emerging church denomination, nor are emerging churches found solely within one denomination."[34] Christianity Today says that, "emerging catches into one term the global reshaping of how to "do church" in our postmodern culture. It has no central offices, and it is as varied as evangelicalism itself."[35] "Emerging churches (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take

[33] Robert Pope, "Emerging Church: Congregation or Aberration?" *International Congregational Journal*, 7.2 (2008): 25-45. Accessed September 21, 2013, EBSCOhost, 33.

[34] Ibid., 34.

[35] Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," *Christianity Today* (February 2007). http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/february/11.35.html.

part in spiritual activities."[36] One such emerging church was Jacob's Well led by Tim Keel. Keel describes that one of the characteristics of the emerging church is that they, "avoid the language of objective truth. They believe that such language is too restrictive. They believe that there are different ways of reasoning, and that the church must make its claims to truth on a contested field without shouting in advance that others are wrong and it alone is right."[37]

David Kimball, insists, "the goal is to move away from a more consumer-oriented, "sit-and-watch" event to a more vintage, community-oriented participatory gathering in which people can experience God as well as hear about him."[38] Pope further characterizes the emerging church as more of a 'mood' or an 'attitude' rather than a belief or a practice.[39] These attempts at doing church differently arose from the idea that Christian faith works best when conveyed to people in forms that resonate with their everyday experiences. This different *paradigm* requires that the church leave the comfort of its traditional setting, and goes in search of the people it has been sent to evangelize. These people may be un-churched or have an ambivalent attitude towards organized religion. "It is the practice of the church that finds where people gather and then begins to grow itself within or on to that natural expression of community."[40]

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[36] Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2005): 44-45.

[37] Jason Byassee, "Emerging Model (cover story),"*Christian Century* 123, no. 19 (September 19, 2006): 20-24, accessed November 4, 2013, EBSCO*host.*

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Byassee, *Emerging Model,* 39.

Small Group Dynamics

Another mechanism used to enhance the church experience is the use of small groups. Kurt Lewin was the first to use the term group dynamics in 1939 and engaged in some of the earliest research on the study of groups. "He saw that groups had lives of their own, so he explored how they worked."[41] Some see the effective use of small groups as essential to building community organizations that thrive. Group dynamics recognizes that people in groups behaved differently than they would individually. While Lewin was the first to formally use the term group dynamic, Jesus Christ addressed issues of relationship and group dynamics in His spectacular Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Here He outlines the internal culture that should be on display in the life of a believer. In this very unique training session Jesus, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the church, gives final instructions to His followers (John 17:20-21). Among the other information he shares we are told that non-believers will be most favorably influenced by how believers relate to one another. According to Andy Stanley and Bill Willits this means that the effectiveness of the mission is dependent upon the way followers relate with one another.[42] This seems to indicate that our relationship with one another is used as a major benchmark for non-believers and that they use our behavior it to gauge the truthfulness of our message.

S*urveying the Religious Landscape* indicates that the church is actively engaged in small group dynamics. "With 40% of adult population participating in some type of

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[41] Michael Jacoby Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups that Can Solve Problems and Change the World* (Arlington, MA: Long Haul Press, 2006), 7-8.

[42] Andy Stanley and Bill Willits, *Creating Community: 5 Keys to Building A Small Group Culture* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2004), 43.

regular small group meeting, both ecclesial and secular organizations are increasingly using small groups as a means to combat the fragmentation that occurs in today's society."[43] They also indicate that church members participate in small groups with greater frequency than the general population and that, "synagogues and churches are helping numerous small groups by providing leadership, supervision, materials and a place to hold meetings. Forty percent of Americans report they belong to small groups that meet regularly."[44] Their data indicates that people feel there is strength in small group settings and note that, "over 100 million small group members across America report they find strength in one another and feel the group heightens their own feelings of self-esteem."[45] The perceived benefits of small group membership are measured in emotional, parental, and financial support (Figure 3). Francis Schaeffer appropriately comments that when all is said and done, "Christian community is the final apologetic."[46]

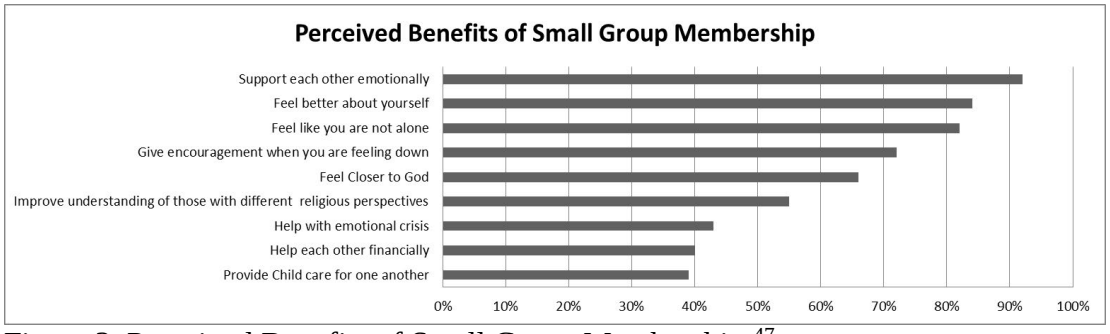

Figure 3. Perceived Benefits of Small Group Membership.[47]

[43] Gallup and Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape*, 90.

[44] Ibid, 93.

[45] Ibid, 92.

[46] Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 14-15.

[47] Gallup and Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape*. 92

Field note 5: Trisha has a difficult time defining herself as un-churched indicating that maybe it's the newness of the term. Trisha reports she has periodically attended bible studies on Monday night at the campground where she resides. She has also attended a couple of the Sunday Services held there. She admits that going to church on Mother's Day could be considered a special event, but argues that going to bible study is not. She would like to believe that going to bible study two times in six months is something more than a special event. She concedes that neither the bible study nor the Sunday Service events are something she does regularly. While Trisha is hesitant to be categorized by the word un-churched she does not feel this interview is inappropriate. She was assured that if she were "churched" or attending church regularly, that she would not be able to answer the questions being asked.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This section represents the biblical, theological, and historical foundational support for the inclusion of all humanity in the family, and the plan of God. It researches the biblical, theological, and historical implications of inclusion and attempts to understand the heart of God towards humanity. We begin by observing Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8:1-9 and are introduced to the concept of Yahweh Oriented Wisdom along the way. The Noahide Covenant, Natural Law and Natural Theology form the theological foundation for this thesis. The model then explores patterns of awakenings and revivals, looks at the Jesus People and the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960's and concludes with a discussion of the political repercussions of those Movements.

Biblical Foundation

The Biblical foundation is written in the form of an exegesis which examines the literal meanings of biblical text and passages of scripture. This thesis will look at an Old

Testament and a New Testament passage of scripture that relate to the inclusion of all humanity in the family, and the plan of God. The exegesis process involves locating key words and phrases in a Hebrew Lexicon, for the Old Testament passage; and a Greek Concordance for the New Testament passage. Researching these passages in their original language will result in a clearer understanding of their message to the 21st century reader.

Hayes and Holladay insist that we use the exegetical process in our everyday attempts to understand things we have heard or read. Given we live in a different time and culture from that of the biblical writer, it becomes important for us to understand the text because, "differences in culture are not just related to ideas, concepts, and worldviews. Also involved are differences in the way things are said and written and the customary way of reading and interpreting."[1] The biblical foundations section or exegesis looks at what the text meant to the original audience.

The Book of Proverbs opens by reminding the reader that the proverbs themselves are, "for learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity; to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young (Proverbs 1:2). We are told a little further on in the Book that Wisdom is the principal thing to obtain (Proverbs 4:7). The Message Bible says it this way, "above all and before all do this: Get Wisdom! Write this at the top of your list: Get understanding." The New Revised Standard Version of the bible articulates the same verse this way, "the beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom,

[1] John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd ed, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 7.

and whatever else you get, get insight." For these reasons Proverbs 8:1-9 will be explored as the Old Testament foundational scripture for this research.

Table 5. Wisdom the Principle Thing: Proverbs 8:1-9

New Century Version Listen to Wisdom	The Message Bible Lady Wisdom Calls Out	New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible
8:1 … Wisdom calls to you like someone shouting, understanding raises her voice.	Do you hear lady Wisdom calling? Can you hear Madam Insight raising her voice?	Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?
8:2 … On the hilltops along the road and at the crossroads, she stands calling.	She's taken her stand at First and Main, at the busiest intersection.	On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;
8:3 … Beside the city gates, at the entrances into the city she calls out:	Right in the city square where the traffic is thickest, she shouts,	beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
8:4 … "Listen, everyone, I'm calling out to you; I am shouting to all people.	"You—I'm talking to all of you, everyone out here on the streets!	"To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.
8:5 …You who are uneducated, seek wisdom. You who are foolish, get understanding.	Listen, you idiots—learn good sense! You blockheads—shape up!	O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
8:6 … Listen, because I have important things to say, and what I tell you is right.	Don't miss a word of this—I'm telling you how to live well, I am telling you how to live at your best.	Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right;
8:7 …What I say is true, I refuse to speak evil.	My mouth chews and savors and relishes truth—I can't stand the taste of evil!	for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
8:8 …Everything I say is honest; nothing I say is crooked or false.	You'll only hear true and right words from my mouth; not one syllable will be twisted or skewed.	All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
8:9 …People with good sense know what I say is true; and those with knowledge know my words are right."	You'll recognize this as true—you with open minds; truth-ready minds will see it at once."	They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge."

Proverbs 8 tells us that wisdom was a "craftsman" or a "master worker" at God's side when He created the world (Proverbs 8:30). Buzzell points out that the presence of wisdom at creation should not suggest that wisdom itself was the Designer.[2] He suggests that, "being at His side implies an intimate association."[3] In Proverbs 8:22 we are told that God "possessed" or *qanah* wisdom "at the beginning of His way," even "before His works of old," i.e., before the process of creation. [4]Some modern versions of the scriptures translate the term *qanah* as "created." The text then would read, "God created wisdom before He created the earth." Within the Book of Proverbs however, the verb *qanah* always means "to possess." [5]

Wisdom existed before "the depths," i.e., the great deep of Genesis 1: 2, and before "the fountains," the subterranean reservoirs which fed the oceans and rivers. Before the mountains or hills "were settled," wisdom was "brought forth" *chul*. The word figuratively indicates Wisdom's conception in the mind and the heart of God. Before God made the earth, the fields, or even the "dust of the world," i.e., the matter of which the physical world was constructed, wisdom was there (8:24–26).[6]

Wisdom literature has travelled through the ancient Near East which is inclusive of the modern states of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran,

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[2] Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 7.

[3]Sid S. Buzzell, *Proverbs in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures,* ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985).

[4] James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: Red Letter Edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2010), #7069, 248.

[5] The modern versions render "qanah" (1) possessed (NIV; NASB; NKJV); (2) created (RSV; JB); (3) made (BV). The LXX supports the rendering "created." Nonetheless, in the twelve other occurrences it means "to possess."

[6] James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms, Old Testament Survey Series* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Co., 1996), Pr. 8:22-26.

and Turkey. The ancient Near East is also referred to as the "Cradle of Civilization" and the "Fertile Crescent" because of the many important cultural advances that have emerged from there. This broad area anchored in the north by Mesopotamia, follows the course of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and then bends south to follow the shoreline of the Mediterranean. The Fertile Crescent continues southward along the Mediterranean into Egypt, and is anchored in the south by the Nile River. In the centuries before Christ a series of great empires flourished in the north and in the south.

Richards explains that, among the ancient Mesopotamian world powers that play a vital role in sacred history was the Assyrian Empire of the 700s BC, the Babylonian Empire of the 600s BC, and the Persian Empire of the 500s BC. Meanwhile, in Egypt, a series of great dynasties also flourished.[7] The multicultural nature of this area contributed greatly to the wisdom literature within the Old Testament. The Hebrew wisdom literature is said to reflect some of the flavor of its neighbors. Concerns found in Hebrew or Old Testament wisdom literature are similar to the concerns of their Near Eastern neighbors.[8] In addition the Near Eastern cultures had their own collection of wisdom literature. Such literature has been found in Egyptian, Syrian, Palestinian, and other Mesopotamian cultures. According to Matthews and Moyers, "Proverbs 22:30 speaks of 'thirty' admonitions, perhaps in direct reference to the Egyptian 'Instruction of Amenemope'."[9]

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[7] Lawrence O. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion, electronic ed.* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 14.

[8] Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1987), 1059.

[9] Victor Matthews and James C. Moyer, *The Old Testament: Text and Context,* 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005), 240-241.

Dockery agrees that the Hebrew wisdom literature shares features with the wisdom writings of the ancient Near East. He reflects that both are practical and deal with the ordinary matters of everyday life. This combination of value and practicality is characteristic of this genre of literature. Hebrew wisdom literature shares structure and organization much like the other wisdom writings, of the region.[10]

In Proverbs 8:1 wisdom the adjective is *chakam* and means, "to be wise, act wisely, make wise, show oneself wise." Wisdom as a noun is represented in the Hebrew as *chokmah* and means "wisdom; experience; shrewdness." The occurrence of both words are found primarily in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The *chakmah* seeks after *chokam*, "wisdom."[11] Like *chakam*, the word *chokmah* can refer to technical skills or special abilities in fashioning something. According to Strong's Concordance, *chokmah* is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time.

The cultures also shared the concept or practice of teaching wisdom in their elite schools. This practice speaks to the belief that accumulated knowledge and experience can be passed on generationally. These "generational instructions" are designed to steer one safely and successfully through life. Wisdom was, in effect, a textbook for royal families and the elite within societies of the Near East. Their youth would have been trained in the ways of wisdom so that in the future they might be wise and productive leaders for the next generation. Whybray postulates that chapters 1–9 of Proverbs are modeled after Egyptian Instructions which served as actual textbooks in their schools.[12]

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[10] David S. Dockery, Trent C. Butler and Christopher L. Church et al., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 351.

[11] Strong, #2451, 87.

[12] R.N. Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition of the Old Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 57.

He insists that the Proverbs were written, "not by a professional scribe class, but by talented Israelite lay persons."[13]

As opposed to being taught only to the elite of society in prestigious schools, Proverbs 8:2 places wisdom on the heights, or in the high places. The Hebrew word for this is "marowm" and it indicates, "higher plane; height or a high social position." In its first biblical occurrence (Judge 5:18), *marowm* means "a higher plane on the surface of the earth." Job 16:19 and Isaiah 33:5 indicate that the word means, "the heights" or the "abode of God." According to *Strong's Concordance marowm* can also signify "self-exaltation."[14]

Proverbs 8:2 notes that wisdom stands. The Hebrew word for stands is *natsab* and means, "to station, set up, or erect." The first scriptural occurrence is in Genesis 18:2 and refers to Abraham's mention that, "three men stood by him." According to *Strong's Concordance* there are many ways to stand. "One may 'stand' for a definite purpose or at a particular spot."[15] The picture is drawn of wisdom being stationed and suggests a sense of permanence. It also demonstrates a proactive approach which is consistent with the approach God has shown throughout scripture; that of actively seeking those in need.

Proverbs has its own special niche within the bible as a whole and within the Old Testament specifically. Unlike the Books of the Law, Proverbs does not deal with sacrificial worship. Unlike the historical books, Proverbs does not outline the history of the nation of Israel's past, or its main characters. The prophetic Books of the Old

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[13] Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition of the Old Testament,* 57.

[14] Strong, #4791, 17.

[15] Ibid, #5324, 190.

Testament are found addressing or warning of the nation's fate; while the Book of Psalms focuses on devotional materials. The book of Proverbs uniquely teaches one the skills of getting along sensibly in life while pleasing God. Practical wisdom, sometimes called lower or prudential wisdom, is represented in the Proverbs. This "home-spun" wisdom is grounded in the fear of The Lord which is the cornerstone of the Hebrew wisdom literature.

Robert Utley explains that the Proverbs are a specialized type of wisdom literature. The genre runs the gamut from,

> Historical proverbs - these are famous and popular sayings of the past which becomes a current truism; to metaphorical proverbs - these are two line sayings which compare things (using comparisons, "like" or "as"); or using contrast. The genre also includes riddles or brain teasers (enigmas); parabolic proverbs -- these are longer, more developed comparisons or contrasts; and even include didactical proverbs -- truths geared for training young men for government service or leadership.[16]

These are very broad and all-encompassing categories. The Old Testament demonstrates the broad dimensions inherent in the use of wisdom. We are told that skilled artisans were considered endowed with the gift of wisdom. God is said to have filled, Bezalel and Oholiab the craftsmen associated with the construction of the tabernacle with the, "skill to do every kind of work of an engraver and of a designer and an embroiderer." In Exodus 35:35, wisdom includes the practical aspect of behavior and of speech. The wise person is one who walks in the ways of God. Wisdom may be acquired from persons of all ages, genders, and occupations.

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[16] Robert J. Utley, *Old Testament Survey: Genesis–Malachi* (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 143-44.

Wisdom is seen as crying out in verse 8:3 of the Book of Proverbs. In Hebrew "cries out" is translated as *ranan* and is a verb meaning "to sing, shout, cry out." According to *Strong's Concordance*, it occurs approximately fifty times in the Hebrew Testament, with about half of those instances in the Book of Psalms. In these cases there is special emphasis on "singing" and "shouting" praises to God. When wisdom is heard, she cries aloud to all who will hear.[17] The word "cry" is a bold expression used to attract attention. It is reminiscent of the town criers who were tasked with shouting out the town news. Proverb 8 has wisdom in the streets, crying out to sinners indiscriminately.

The Authorship of Proverbs

King Solomon is generally acknowledged as the author of the Book of Proverbs. Solomon was well known and respected for his pursuit of wisdom (1 Kings 4:29–34; 1 Kings 3:16-28). Davis notes that, Proverbs are essentially oral literature that were circulated by word of mouth. Although some may be ascribed to a particular historical figure, in a real sense their author is the community that keeps them alive in its daily speech and practice. It is, then, the authority of the community that speaks through them– and very significantly, not just to the present generation.[18] Raymond Brown directs attention to the custom of attributing ancient, "Literature to an author in the sense of the *authority* behind that style of literature."[19]

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[17] Strong, #7442, 263.

[18] Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 12.

[19] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 190.

Accordingly, because Solomon is known for his pursuit and attainment of wisdom, he qualifies to be the patron of the wisdom writers. Brown suggests that, "Solomon was spoken of as the author of the Wisdom Literature (Proverbs. Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom or Song of Solomon) because his court offered an atmosphere in which wisdom literature could develop, and thus he served as the patron of the wisdom writer."[20] He points out that similarly, "David was spoken of as the author of the Psalms, and Moses as author of the Pentateuch, though parts of these works were composed many hundreds of years after these individuals have died."[21]

Utley indicates that, like the Psalms, several people are mentioned as authoring the Book of Proverbs. Specifically, Solomon (Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and the sages (Proverbs 22:17; 24:23) Agur, (Proverbs 30:1 and Lemuel, (Proverbs 31:1).[22] These signify the contributions of everyday Godly individuals. This dual authorship is also documented in Proverbs 25:1 where the writer informs us that men of the court of Hezekiah compiled Solomon's proverbs. These individuals, sometimes referred to as sages, filled an important function within the Israelite society. The sage is cited along with the priest and the prophet, as one of the three sources of authoritative guidance for the community (Jeremiah 18:18, Ezekiel 7:26). These royal counselors were part of the corps of professional officers comprising the cabinet in the courts of David and Solomon (2 Samuel 8:16-18; 20:23-26; 1 Kings 4:1-6). While the prophets delivered direct

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[20] Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, 190.

[21] Ibid, 192.

[22] Utley, Old Testament Survey: Genesis-Malachi, 144.

revelations from God, the wise men operated as personal counselors and political advisors.

Wisdom Personified

The Book of Proverbs parades wisdom before us in the form of a person. In this way Wisdom is said to be personified. We see examples of the person of wisdom in Proverbs 1:20, 8:1, and 9:1. Here we see wisdom not as an abstract, and not as a representative of a doctrine or a teaching, but rather as a person. The personification of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs also illustrates the personal aspects of the fear of the Lord. Lady Wisdom is portrayed as an itinerant female pedagogue seeking students at the city gates (Proverbs 8:1-12), and as a master architect working with God during creation (Proverbs 8:22-31). According to Old Testament historians Andrew Hill and John Walton in each case emphasis is placed on the experience of a relationship with the person of wisdom.[23] Wisdom, in chapters 1, 8, and 9 of Proverbs, is more than an abstract concept. By personifying wisdom, she becomes more immediate, intimate and approachable. The description is of someone we would want to know personally. Here Lady Wisdom becomes someone whose company we would seek to engage. Lady Wisdom is portrayed as kind, honest and honorable. Other descriptors that readily come to mind are inclusive, gracious, proactive, and provincial, helpful and resourceful.

Lady Wisdom can be found in the public and communal places where humanity is known to congregate. We are told that Wisdom stations herself at the more conspicuous

[23] Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2009), 394.

sites. She is seen on, "the heights beside the way . . . at the crossroads . . . beside the gates in front of the town." These are the places Lady Wisdom takes her stand. Wisdom is proactively standing where she can be sure of an audience (Proverbs 8:1–3).

While in these locations, Wisdom raises her voice within the hearing of all. She imparts her knowledge indiscriminately. She is approachable, engaging, accessible, and ambassador-like in her approach. Lady Wisdom does not present theories. She is not engaged in intellectual or theoretical knowledge but in what Hill and Walton call *Yahweh O*r*iented Wisdom.*[24] Davis adds that the fear of the Lord is the variable that sets Hebrew wisdom apart from the human wisdom of other cultures. Throughout the book of Proverbs this theme is reinforced (Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 15:33).[25] Yahweh Oriented Wisdom is practical and resides within the context of one's behavior; unlike human wisdom, which is based on intuition and cultural understanding. It is important to this research to note that Wisdom does not operate in isolated, or divorced from practice.

Wisdom does not present theories. She does not know anything about the intellectualism of the Greek wisdom *Sophia or* theoretical knowledge. Yahweh Oriented Wisdom resided within the context of one's behavior. In the Hebrew context, if you did not live wisdom, then you did not understand it. There is no theory without practice. Greek wisdom (*sophos*) was intellectual. In the Hebrew context wisdom is imbedded within one's life, and behaved in accordance with the laws of God. New Testament wisdom (*sophia*) has the same intensely practical nature as the wisdom of the Old Testament.

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[24] Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 393.

[25] Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 28.

Wisdom among the Hebrews, as among the Egyptians, was the art of living a happy life. The existence of an objective unchanging order was the tacit or explicit presupposition of all Wisdom literature, as discussed in the Biblical Foundations section. Wisdom is based upon practical use. Wisdom does not legislate, it counsels. Lovin also reminds us that early Christians were familiar with the "wisdom literature" of the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. They also knew that there were similar traditions among the many peoples and religions that the Israelites lived in proximity to. "Much of what scripture teaches clearly as the command of God can also be learned by people who are paying attention to their own experience, whether they know the Scriptures or not."[26]

According to Richards and Richards, "a wise person will apply guidelines revealed by God and make his daily decisions based on these truths."[27] They go on to explain that wisdom unites God's words and everyday experience, and that it is only in the way a person lives his life that wisdom can be demonstrated and authenticated.[28]

Wisdom an attribute of God (Job 12:13; Ephesians 1:8; Jeremiah 10:12) is shared with humanity and is revealed in the Scripture (Psalms 19:7–11). Isaiah 11:2 says of the Messiah that, "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of

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[26] Robin Lovin, *Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 46.

[27] Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: VictorBooks, 1987), 339.

[28] Ibid.

the LORD." Waltke concludes "she [wisdom] emerges as a unique personality whose only peer is Jesus Christ."[29]

Wisdom in the Hebrew Context

The fear of the Lord is a primary component of the Hebrew wisdom literature. Regardless of how similar wisdom literature has been used in other cultures, wisdom within the Hebrew culture is unique and directly related to God. The concept of "the fear of the Lord" distinguishes Hebrew wisdom from that of its Near Eastern neighbors. For the nation of Israel as represented by the Old Testament, wisdom and the knowledge of God are inseparable. For them, God was the source and dispenser of insight and understanding (Job 12:13; Proverbs 2:5-6; Isaiah 31:1-2).

> *Field note 6:* Angela says that her mom, "Walked the walk, and talked the talk … she was the real deal." Angela learned very early that many people say they're spiritual but are not practicing that spirituality. She notes, "One does not necessarily have anything to do with the other." She goes on to further explain that her mother didn't reject anything, and that everything her mother was exposed to she used in her everyday life. This is how Angela came to better understand biblical principles and how to integrate them into her practical, daily life experiences.

The revelation of wisdom personified is continued in the New Testament. The Christ hymn of Colossians 1:15–20; the Gospel of John (1:14); and the Book of Hebrews (1:3) all reinforce this theme.

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[29] Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 1-15, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 85.

Colossians 1:15-20, the New Testament foundational scripture for this thesis, is one of the four letters written by Paul while imprisoned in Rome. He is writing to the relatively new believers who seemed to be exhibiting some confusion about who Christ truly is. Of Colossae Utley reminds us that it was, "a large commercial center located on the Lycus River, a tributary of the Maeander River, which ran right by Ephesus which was about 100 miles downstream. …The city of Colossae was part of the kingdom of Pergamum within Phrygia. In 133 B.C. it was given over to Rome rule."[30] Colossians 1:15-20 reads:

Table 6. Reconciler of All Things: Colossians 1:15-20

New Century Version (The Importance of Christ)	The Message Bible (Christ Holds it all Together)	New Revised Standard Version
1:15… No one can see God, but Jesus Christ is just like him. He ranks higher than everything that has been made.	We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created.	He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;
1:16… Through his power all things were made – things seen and unseen, all powers, authorities, lords and rulers. All things were made through Christ and for Christ.	For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—*everything* got started in him and finds its purpose in him.	For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.
1:17… He was before anything was made, and all things continue because of him.	He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment.	He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
1:18… He is the head of the body, which is the church. Everything comes from him. He is the first one who was raised from	And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.	He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first

[30] Utley, *Old Testament Survey: Genesis-Malachi*, 87.

the dead. So in all things Jesus has first place.		place in everything.
1:19… God was pleased for all of himself to live in Christ.	He is supreme in the beginning and -– leading the resurrection parade— he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone.	For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
1:20… And through Christ, God has brought all things back to himself again – things on earth and things in heaven. God made peace through the blood of Christ's death on the cross.	So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe— people and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.	and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The New Testament continues to develop the concept of the personification of Wisdom by identifying Jesus Christ as the master architect of creation (Colossians 1:15-17). The apostle Paul indicates that walking in the way of wisdom begins when one acknowledges that God is the source of life and, that God made Christ our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Warren Wiersbe informs us that the purpose of this letter was, "to respond to problematic issues among the congregation at Colossae. This area was a meeting point of East and West, and many important trade routes converged here. … all kinds of philosophies mingled in this cosmopolitan area, and religious hucksters abounded. There was a large Jewish colony in Colossae, and there was also a constant influx of new ideas and doctrines from the East.

It was fertile ground for religious speculations and heresies."[31] In order to address the heresies circulating in Colossae Paul exalted Christ as the very image of God (Colossians 1:15), the Creator (Colossians 1:16), the preexistent sustainer of all things (Colossians 1:17), the head of the church (Colossians 1:18), the first to be resurrected (Colossians 1:18), the fullness of deity in bodily form (Colossians 1:19, 2:9) and the reconciler (Colossians 1:20–22). Paul also reminds us that Christ was completely adequate, and that believers have been provided wholeness in Christ (Colossians 2:10).

O'Collins clarifies that in Colossians 1:15-17 Christ is compared with pre-existent Wisdom in that both are present at the time of creation. He suggests that Paul is painting a picture of the, "Son as coming into the world from the Father and as having been active in the creation of the world (1 Cor. 8:6)."[32] Additionally, Christ is portrayed as a teacher of wisdom and endowed with the Spirit (Mark 1:10, Luke 4:18). Paul calls Him 'the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:24), 'in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden' (Col. 2:3). Christ is the very embodiment of heavenly wisdom (Matt 12:19). This is not to say that Proverbs 8 is a prophecy of Christ; it is rather a proactive attempt to portray wisdom in a way that humanity can relate. All that divine wisdom entails is embodied in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

In the Book of Colossians Paul described Jesus as Lord of creation, the "firstborn," (Col. 1:15). Firstborn or *prototokos* is used of Christ being born of the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7). It indicates His relationship to God and expresses His

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[31] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996).

[32] Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus,* 2nd ed. (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 250.

[The Christ] priority to, and preeminence over creation. This preeminence is not in the sense of being the first to be born, but is used to indicate superiority of position (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 21:16, 17).[33]

"Image" or *eikōn* in Greek means "a likeness," and involves two other ideas. One is that of *representation*. In this respect it is allied to "character" a mark or figure burned or stamped on, an impression, a precise reproduction in every respect, and differs from *homoiōma* 'a likeness.' In *homoiōma* the resemblance may be accidental, as one egg is like another, but *eikōn* implies an archetype which is a copy. The *eikōn* might be the result of direct imitation like the head of a sovereign on a coin, or it might be due to natural causes like the parental features in the child, but in any case, it was derived from its prototype."[34] The Lord Jesus is therefore the image of God. Our Lord said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). That is, the Son is the exact reproduction of the Father.

Colossians 1:19 demonstrates the fullness of God dwelling in Christ. In the Greek, *katoikeo* means to house permanently. This verb signifies "to settle down in a dwelling, to dwell fixedly in a place." In addition to this literal sense, it is also used to demonstrate the "indwelling" of the totality of the attributes of the powers of the Godhead in Christ, (Colossians 1:19 and 2:9).

In Colossians 1:20 God has used Christ to reconcile or *apokatallasso* us. In the Greek the word *apokatallasso* indicates being reconciled fully. The word indicates a change from one condition to another so as to remove all enmity and leave no

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[33] Strong, #4416, 213.

[34] Ibid, #1504, 77.

impediment to unity and peace. In Colossians 1:20 the word is used to highlight or emphasize the divine purpose for which Christ came to earth. That purpose was to reconcile, "All things unto himself, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens, the basis of the change being the peace effected through the blood of His cross."[35] There is nothing that can be added to Jesus Christ to make him either a better or a greater Savior. The Greek word translated here fullness is *pleroma*. Paul uses *pleroma* to remind the Colossians that there is nothing lacking in Christ because the fullness of deity, power and grace are his (Colossians 2:9).

Christ engaged everyone and was fully reconciled to God. This state of reconciliation made Jesus accessible to all, including the un-churched. In the time of Christ the un-churched were represented primarily by those who were not Jewish. The non-Jew or gentile was excluded from accessing God during temple. There were very formal rules and regulations about who was welcome in the temple. Many groups could not enter at all, some could only come into the outer courts of the temple. Much like the church today, temple excluded certain individuals. For example, Jewish women were only allowed in certain sections of the temple. Groups like the Samaritans who were not of pure Israelite genealogy, were also not allowed in the temple. People with leprosy or any other physical abnormality were excluded from worship and spiritual interaction as well. Given these people could not partake in temple life, Jesus engaged them outside of the temple and was consistently found outside of the temple teaching. So, while His custom was to go into the temple, He never minimized His role to community, or to the disenfranchised who represented the un-churched.

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[35] Strong, #604, 36.

Christ has dominion over all things which demonstrates the preeminence of Christ, and places Him as our prototype. These passages, juxtaposed with His practical earthly ministry, point to the accessibility of Christ in both theory and practice. Wisdom is portrayed as going through the city, loudly pleading with the naive to heed her call (Proverbs 8:1-4; Proverbs 1:20-21). Jesus also pleaded with sinners: 'come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light' (Matthew 11:28-30). Similarly, Wisdom calls out to all classes of people indiscriminately (Proverbs 8:4-5; Proverbs 1:22). Though she is great, she reaches out to the simple and lowly (Proverbs 8:5). Christ also reaches out to humanity, freely offering Himself to all. Reminiscent of Lady Wisdom, Christ stands and cries out, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37–38). Like Wisdom, Jesus sends his servants out into the world to do the same (Proverbs 9:3; Luke 14:23; Matt. 28:18–20).

Neither Wisdom nor Jesus Christ stands divorced from God. Without revelation from God both would be poverty stricken and anemic at best (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:4; 2 Corinthians 1:12), and foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:19, James 3:15). Human wisdom is based on intuition and cultural understanding. It does not compare with *Yahweh Oriented Wisdom*. Clinging to human wisdom results in the very heresy Paul is attempting to address in his letter to the Colossians. *Yahweh Oriented Wisdom* may prove to be the bridge to a healthy and thriving connection back to God for the un-churched.

> *Field note 7:* "There's, religion, church, and spirituality." She [Angela] goes on to explain that in terms of everything she had learned over time, she knew, "she didn't have to go to church to be spiritual, or to talk to God." She does not describe this as an "aha moment," but rather as growing to fruition, a sort of "evolutionary epiphany.

Theological Foundation: Doing What Comes Naturally

> It is a terrible and dangerous arrogance to believe that you alone are right, that you have a magical eye which sees the truth and others cannot be right if they disagree. This makes it certain that there is one way, and one only and that it is worth any amount of suffering (particularly on the part of other people) if only the way prevails.[36]

This type of fundamentalism distorts Christianity. It rests on the exclusive claim by some Christians that theirs is the only "true" religion and that all others are both wrong and evil. This mentality has caused religious wars and crusades, and has made it seem that faith is the enemy of peace and good will. In our religiously pluralistic nation, these exclusive attitudes have caused divisiveness which produces the very dangerous fundamentalism we find so alarming in other faiths.

God's proactive nature is demonstrated over and over throughout the Scriptures. In Genesis 3 we are told that God came looking for Adam. Until that time the reader had only heard about God. Soon after Cain killed his brother Abel God also came looking for him as well. We see account after account of God proactively seeking out individuals. In Genesis 6 we find God taking the initiative to instruct Noah on the building of the Ark. Centuries later in Genesis 12 God orchestrated an encounter with Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). This encounter led to the giving of the law

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[36] Isaiah Berlin, "Notes on Prejudice," The New York Review of Books, 48, no. 16 (October 18, 2001): 12.

at Sinai. This pattern of proactivity continued as God seeks out Moses through the burning bush. The bush is said to be burning but not consumed (Exodus 3). It is this unusual site that leads to his encounter with God. In an unprecedented display of proactivity, God sends Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and centuries of slavery (Exodus 14). Had not God been proactively seeking these individuals these encounters may have never taken place. In the New Testament we see this preemptive action of God being demonstrated as well. God stops Paul [then Saul] on the road to Demascus in the Book of Acts, chapter 9. This encounter leads to Saul's conversion. Some may have thought Saul would be the last person God would have chosen to advance His kingdom agenda, but salvation belongs to God. This proactive, revelatory nature appears to be characteristic of the God of the Universe. No one expected that later in Acts 10 God would arrange for Cornelius to connect with the disciple Peter. This specific encounter opened the door that brought salvation to the non-Jew or gentile. While a critical advancement in the Kingdom agenda, it is worth noting that God did not seek permission from the leaders in the temple.

The term *orthodoxy* in its strictest sense means, "correct doctrine," . . . for this reason all churches consider themselves orthodox. Justo Gonzalez goes on to say that the term is used with, "pejorative overtones, to describe a sort of theology that seeks to define every possible point of doctrine or belief, claiming that those who do not agree are heretics."[37] Oxford Dictionary provides a broader, worldview designation and defines orthodox as, "holding currently accepted opinions, esp. on religious doctrine, morals, etc.; of religious doctrine, standards of morality, etc.; generally accepted as right or true;

[37] Justo L. Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 124-125.

conventional."[38] The un-churched demographic includes believers who are anything but orthodox.

Gonzalez defines Natural Law as the law that is implanted in human hearts, which allows individuals to know what is good even apart from revelation directly from God.[39] Natural Theology is defined by Gonzalez as, "a theology that claims to be based on the natural gifts of the human mind, and on the "general revelation" granted to all, rather than on a "special revelation" in Scripture or in Jesus Christ."[40]

General revelation is so called because everyone receives it by virtue of being alive in God's world. This has been so from the start of human history.[41] "General revelation, sometimes called original or universal revelation, is God's self-disclosure in the creation, in the moral consciousness of humanity, in history, and in human reason. Special revelation refers to God's self-disclosure in the events recorded and interpreted in the Bible."[42] In general revelation, God is self-disclosing the nature of spiritual things to man. In special revelation, God encounters specific individuals, like Adam, Abraham, Saul, and Peter, and reveals to that person the nature of spiritual things.

In *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics,* Steven Wilkens paints a beautiful picture of Natural Law Ethics as simply doing what comes naturally, no more and no less. He describes natural in this context as referring to the way things ought to be, not the way

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[38] *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Orthodox."

[39] Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms*, 98.

[40] Ibid., 118.

[41] J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).

[42] Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology, 3rd ed. (*New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 30.

they actually are. When something works the way it is designed to, it is said to be functioning naturally. Natural is the equivalent of right or good. Wilkens indicates that a sense of well-being lets us know that things are as they should be. He categorizes our feelings of disgust or guilt as indicators that something is not right. The *law* part of natural law ethics tells us that there is consistency to the way the world ought to work. Just as we speak of the constancy of gravity as a law, so we can also speak of the wrongness of stealing car stereos as law. Theft will be no less wrong tomorrow than it is today. Moral law is universal and consistent.[43]

Traditionally, natural theology is understood to refer to what can be known of God through the natural world without any divine guidance or revelation. According to John Cobb, "Natural Theology is often identified with that of theological importance which can be known independently of all that is special to a particular community."[44] Milton Konvitz quotes from Cicero and Grotius who explain that, "Natural Law is not dependent upon philosophy, or upon a philosophy of nature, but upon the *nature of man*. It is based upon a belief that the nature of man necessarily involves certain *natural laws.*[45] Natural Law is very often associated with belief in natural theology or natural religion.

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[43] Steven Wilkens, *Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 150.

[44] John B. Cobb Jr, *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 170.

[45] Milton R. Konvitz, "Natural Law and Judaism: The Case of Maimonides," *Judaism* 45, no.1 (Winter 1996): 29, accessed September 23, 2013, EBSCOhost.

David Novak addresses the issue of how Judaism presupposes natural law. He notes that Judaism teaches that before the Jews became the uniquely covenanted people of God, they were participants in a more general world. The general culture they came from advocated that specific norms were to be applied everywhere.[46] He describes *everywhere* as being the borders of the world that includes as much of mankind as possible. It is an inclusive concept which involves just treatment for the stranger, the non-resident and the non-member. The worldview we find in the Bible is theocentric. This simply means that God is governing. In the Old Testament, according to Hill and Walton,

> The idea of law was not unique to the Hebrews in the ancient Near East. Law collections were published in Mesopotamia as early as 2000 BC, some five centuries (or more) before the time of Moses. The better of these legal documents are the Sumerian Laws of Ur-Nammu (Ur III Dynasty, 2064-2046, or perhaps his son Shulgi, 2046-1999) and Lipit-Ishtar (king of Isin, 1875-1864), and the Old Babylonian Laws of Eshnunna (nineteenth century BC) and Hammurabi (or Hammurapi, king of Babylon, 1792-1750). The influence of the ancient Near Eastern legal tradition on the form and function of Hebrew law is undeniable and widely documented.[47]

In the wisdom literature of ancient Egypt, God is a universal being, a deity for and of all creation. God is not merely the national or ethnic deity of a particular group. This tendency in ancient Egyptian culture, to see God as universal, is likely attributed in part to the universal character of wisdom which for them transcended the boundaries of nationalism. So, we find in wisdom an early expression of natural theology, which also transcends the boundaries of nationalism.

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[46] David Novak, "Is Natural Law a Border Concept Between Judaism and Christianity?" *Journal of Religious Ethics,* 32, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 243, accessed September 21, 2013, EBSCOhost.

[47] Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 62.

Eventually the effort to relate human wisdom to a more basic order established by God in creation took the form of the theory of natural law. Lovin says that, "Natural law does not apply to us because we are citizens of a particular country or believers in a certain religion or because we have been taught a certain set of moral rules. It applies to us because we are human."[48] The issues of natural law or natural theology are recurring in church history. Much of the controversy surrounding natural law stems from the wide variety of meanings that have historically been attached to the term *natural law.* At different times the term has been used to, "refer to such diverse things as the cosmic order that rules the entire universe, the international law that governs just relations among nations, and, most commonly, the grounds of natural justice that always remain operative in social and political life."[49]

Otto Piper asks us to consider that when Paul speaks of, the invisible things of God which from the creation of the world are perceived by the creatures in a rational way, (Romans 1:20) that he is suggesting that all men are capable of knowing God. But that is possible not because God and nature are identical, as Stoicism held, but rather because God has manifested to man's mind his eternal power and transcendence (Romans 1:21)."[50] Paul does not deny that, apart from the special revelation given to Israel, a general knowledge of God is to be found in the human race. He [Paul] argues that its origin lies in God's self-manifestation, not in man's mind. So, even as God gave his revealed law to Moses at Sinai to be engraved on tablets of stone, so also did he write his

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[48] Lovin, *Christian Ethics*, 47.

[49] Marc D. Guerra, "The Limits of Darwinian Natural Law," *Perspectives on Political Science* 34, no. 3 (July, 2005): 144 (accessed September 21, 2013).

[50] Otto A. Piper, "What is Natural Law?" *Theology Today* 2, no. 4 (January 1, 1946): 461, accessed September 21, 2013, EBSCOhost.

will upon every man's heart, and shared His Spirit with every person as promised (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26; and Acts 2:`17).

> The Reformers agreed with the medieval theologians in the belief that, there is a natural law, given by God to all men as the basis of moral and social life. …everything in this world is "natural," i.e. created; the Church, no less than the family, the state, the economic, and cultural life. …there is a division of labor among them, but they all together form the social life of mankind. …by this insight, the reformers abolished the idea of a *corpus Christianum* a social organization headed and directed by the Church.[51]

Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) describes that the world and the humans who inhabit it are made to work in a particular way, and that when something goes wrong "warning lights" go off. Aquinas's Summa contra Gentiles, discusses the concept of God, as He is related to creation. Aquinas says that there exists a fundamental likeness to God within the created order as a consequence of God being the cause of all created things. No created thing can be said to come into existence spontaneously, the existence of all things can be considered to be a consequence of a relationship of causal dependence between the creation and the Creator. Aquinas also recognized, "the possibility of the salvation of Gentiles in classical antiquity through implicit faith in divine providence."[52] He affirms the, possibility of wider ranges of divine revelation as well as the autonomy of God to deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to God. Drummond argues that natural law, as described by Aquinas, assumes the existence of broad principles of human behavior. These principles are based ultimately on the eternal law which exists in the mind or will of God but has been made accessible to humanity by use of reason.

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[51] Piper, *What is Natural Law,* 466.

[52] Drummond, *Toward a New Age in Christian Theology*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbus Books, 1985), 46.

Noahic Covenant and Noahide Laws

Covenant is described as, "an oath or promise binding two or more parties together. These parties may be of unequal social standing, and in that case the covenant establishes the nature and terms of their future relationship."[53] The general purpose for a covenant is to provide a binding sense of commitment to an interpersonal relationship. Those who enter into a covenant obligate themselves to that relationship, providing it with a strong sense of security.[54] The Noahic Covenant, also called Noahite, Noachite, or Noachide, is a covenant made between God and Noah after the flood. It involves all creatures and all future generations of mankind.[55]

Scripturally Adam and Eve were the first man and woman created. They, and not Abram and Sarai, are the originators of the human race. Scripture tells us that it was Adam and Eve who were made in the image of God. Konvitz notes that, "nowhere in the Bible is it stated or intimated that by choosing Israel, God abandoned the rest of mankind. For God is not a tribal deity. He is the creator of the whole universe, He is *echod,* the one and only God, not only for Israel, but for all nations, all peoples."[56] In the Noahic Covenant of Genesis 9, God makes a covenant with all of humanity.

God's dealings with Noah began in Genesis 6:7 when God tells him, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and

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[53] Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms,* 40.

[54] Ibid., 3.

[55] Kevin J. Connor and Ken Malmin, *The Covenants: The Key to God's Relationship with Mankind* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1983), 22.

[56] Konvitz, *Natural Law and Judaism: The Case of Maimonides,* 32.

creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." God then gives Noah very specific instructions on how to build the ark. He is told to take his family and certain animals onto the ark, and to wait out the rain that would come and submerge the earth. The flood kills every living thing that is not on the ark. Here is the account of what was experienced once the waters receded.

Table 7. The Noahide Covenant: Genesis 9: 8-17

New Century Version	The Message Bible	New Revised Standard Version
9:8 … Then God said to Noah and his sons,	Then God spoke to Noah and his sons:	Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,
9:9 …Now I am making my agreement with you and your people who will live after you	"I am setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you,	"As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you,
9:10 …and with every living thing that is with you—the birds, the tame and the wild animals, and with everything that came out of the boat with you—with every living thing on earth	Along with everything alive around you—birds, farm animals, wild animals—that came out of the ship with you.	and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark
9:11 …I make my agreement with you: I will never again destroy all living things by flood. A flood will never again destroy the earth."	I am setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the earth."	I establish my covenant with you, that never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."
9:12 …And God said, "This is the sign of the agreement between me and you and every living creature that is with you. .	God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you, and everyone living after you.	God said, "this is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:
9:13 …I am putting my rainbow in the clouds as the sign of the agreement between me and the earth.	I'm putting my rainbow in the cloud, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth.	I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

9:14 …When I bring clouds over the earth and a rainbow appears in them,	From now on, when I form a cloud over the earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud,	When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen in the clouds,
9:15 … I will remember my agreement between me and you and every living thing. Floods will never again destroy all life on the earth.	I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life	I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters will never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.
9:16 …When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and I will remember the agreement that continues forever between me and every living thing on the earth."	When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on earth."	When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

Genesis 9:12-17 states that the rainbow was given by God as the token of this Covenant. God placed the sign of the rainbow in the sky between heaven and earth. God committed to remember this covenant when looking towards earth. Likewise, when we see the rainbow, as we look towards the heavens, we are reminded of God's covenant with humankind. Physical signs are associated with other biblical covenants. For example, circumcision is given as the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17), and the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant at Sinai (Exodus 31). The Noahide commandments were addressed to all human beings. This Covenant is the beginning of a formal legal system meant to govern a civil society, explains Wilf.[57] The rainbow, a natural phenomenon, represents the visual sign of that covenant. The bow in the cloud, seen by every nation under heaven, is an unfailing witness to the universal covenant of

[57] Steven Wilf, *The Law Before the Law* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), 49.

God.[58] The seven resulting Noahide laws are universal and intended to allow all mankind to connect to the Creator. These seven laws are as follows: 1) Do not eat a limb cut off a live animal; 2) Do not curse God's name; 3) Do not worship idols; 4) Do not commit adultery; 5) Establish courts of law; 6) Do not steal; 7) Do not murder.

Throughout the ages, scholars have viewed the Noahide Laws as universal norms of ethical conduct; as a basic concept in international law; or as a guarantee of fundamental human rights for all of us.[59] Genesis 9:8-9 indicates, "and God said to Noah, and to his sons with him, as for Me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you." All of this occurred centuries prior to God's special revelation or "calling out" of the nation of Israel! The law, so critical to Jewish culture, was understood by generations prior to the revelation at Sinai. Of this Wilf states the obvious, that there was a law before the law was given at Sinai. "The law before the law was seen as much more fluid, oral, customary, discretionary, rooted in the particularities of an earlier social reality, deeply enmeshed in a web of legend, predicated upon the compass of individual psychology, and indeterminate than the received tradition of Sinai legalism."[60] Abraham, the Patriarch of the Jewish faith, first encounters God in Genesis 12, long after the Noahic Covenant had been established.

Aaron Chalmers suggests that, "the Noahic covenant, including the various divine promises which accompany it, guarantees God's commitment to creation, and in

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[58] William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000), 454.

[59] Michael E. Dallen, *The Rainbow Covenant: Torah and the Seven Universal Laws* (New York, NY: Lightcatcher Books, 2003).

[60] Wilf, *The Law Before the Law*, 211.

particular, the preservation of life on the earth."[61] This commitment is found in a number of the promises made by God. These unconditional promises speak to God's commitment to creation, guaranteeing that life will continue to flourish, and that the natural order will continue. In Genesis 8:22 God guarantees the stable conditions necessary for the production of the crops, which are essential for the growth of both human and animal life on the earth. Chalmers concludes that, "at the end of the day the permanence of the covenant, and its accompanying promises, is based on the unconditional commitment of God to the human and non-human creation."[62]

God is not only free, but also shows up outside, as well as within the historic bounds of Israel and the Christian church. Georges Khodr, the Greek Orthodox theologian, expresses that, "all who are visited by the Spirit are the people of God."[63] He sees the election of Israel as, "particular but from it the economy of the divine mystery is deployed for the whole of humanity . . . Israel is saved as the type and representative of the whole of mankind."[64] Khodr insists other nations have had their own revelation of the reality of Christ, whether in the form of persons or teachings.

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[61] Aaron Chalmers, "The Importance of the Noahic Covenant to Biblical Theology," *Tyndale,* Bulletin 60, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 209, accessed September 21, 2013, EBSCOhost.

[62] Ibid., 210.

[63] Drummond, *Toward a New Age in Christian Theology*, 84.

[64] Ibid.

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Towards the Righteous Heathen

Budziszewski tells us that, "the Bible maintains that God has not left himself without a witness among the pagans (Acts 14:17). In contrast to a special revelation, provided by God to the community of faith, this may be called general revelation because it is provided by God to all mankind."[65] These are laws that are evident to all humanity. This is valuable to the Christian because it provides foundational talking points or areas of common ground for those who do not believe exactly what Christians believe. The ability to find common ground allows discussion to begin. Lack of common ground is isolating and provides little opportunity to converse with others of different beliefs. Budziszewski believes that the unconverted Gentiles, who have neither waited at the foot of Sinai nor sat at the feet of Jesus, are still accountable to God. This makes general revelation tremendously important to Christians who are speaking to their nonbelieving neighbors. He states that, "they do not start out believing in Scripture; if it does make sense to them, it will do so by illuminating what God has already made partly known to them by other means."[66]

Konvitz defines the midwives who refused to kill all of the male children born to Hebrew women upon order of the pharaoh, as righteous. Scripture tells us that the midwives listened to the voice of their conscience. Instead of doing what was expected of them, these women did what they believed was the right thing to do (Exodus 1:17). The story of Rahab the prostitute, from the book of Joshua 2 presents another example of a righteous heathen. Rahab was a non-Jew who hid the spies sent in to scout the city of

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[65] Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law*, 180.

[66] Ibid., 181.

Jericho. When the city fell, she and her family were spared. Scripture tells us that Rahab recognized the true God. Due to her faithfulness this gentile was joined and accepted into the nation of Israel. She is counted among the ancestors of both King David and Jesus Christ.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, explains:

> When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscious also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all (Romans 2:14-16).

God's desire to connect with the individual is consistent in both the Old and in the New Testaments, producing pattern of proactivity. Again, the scripture tells us that salvation belongs to God. God does not need to pass our doctrine test in order to engage anyone. When we think and then speak collectively of the church [Corpus Christianum] we may find it easy to lose site of the individuals God has called to make up the body of believers. These individuals, by design, are the instruments used to harvest the world for the Kingdom of God. Many churches tacitly expect that people, "clean themselves up" before seeking God. They fashion themselves the gatekeepers.

We are Ambassadors for Jesus Christ not because we speak certain words in a prescribed order, but because acknowledge, and honor the God of the universe. The Oxford Dictionary defines an ambassador as, "An accredited diplomat sent by a nation on a mission to, or as it permanent representative in, a foreign country…a representative or promoter of a specified thing (an ambassador of peace)."[67] As accredited diplomats, we

[67] *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "Ambassador."*

represent God and the kingdom of heaven. Specifically we promote peace, and our objective is to leave certain situations better than what we found. Ambassadors add value they do not exacerbate situations. Additionally, they do not necessarily share their own opinions, even though they are intelligent enough to have them. They specifically speak on behalf of the country that accredits them.

In *Grace, The Power of the Gospel*, Andrew Wommack reminds us that the Gospel is good news, not bad news. Wommack believes that we should seriously limit what we mean by the word *gospel*. He notes that many things that are not good news have been promoted as such. People in the Christian culture of the United States associate the gospel with teaching like, 'You're a sinner and if you don't repent, you're going to hell!' While they may see these things as true, they are certainly not the gospel or good news.[68] In seeking to clarify the role of the Church in Natural Law John Reed indicates that:

> There is a significant difference between the Church's teaching of the natural law and the Church's making laws of its own. The Church is free to change the latter but not the former. Even if, and to the extent that, a teaching on morality is reformable, it is not reformable at the free choice of the Church, a matter of legislative will, but only if and because the former teaching is perceived to have been imperfect or to be no longer applicable in a changed situation. In one case the Church recognizes a law already in existence in the order of creation willed by God, and the Church simply declares that this is so. In the other case the Church itself constitutes the law, within the scope of its authority and with a view to the salvation and sanctification of souls, as the law of fast and abstinence, or of hearing Mass on Sundays, or of the Eucharistic fast, or of matrimonial form and impediments, or of clerical celibacy, etc. The Church can change the laws which it makes, but not those already constituted by God.[69]

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[68] Andrew Wommack, *Grace, the Power of the Gospel: It's Not What You Do, But What Jesus Did* (Tulsa, OK: Harrison House Publishers 2007), 5.

[69] John J. Reed, "Natural Law, Theology, and the Church*," Theological Studies* 6, no. 1 (March 1965): 63, accessed September 25, 2013, EBSCOhost.

The Apostle Paul advised believers to live wisely among those who are not Christians and to, let your conversation be gracious and effective (Colossians 4:5-6). He could be writing no better advice to committed Christians in the 21st century. In the essay, *Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution,* Martin Luther King, Jr. profiles the story of Rip Van Winkle's journey into the mountains when King George III of England ruled America. Van Winkle falls asleep for twenty years. When he awakes and comes back down the mountain, George Washington is the first president of the new Americas. What is striking about the story is that not only did Rip Van Winkle sleep for twenty years, but that he had also slept through a revolution. King remarks, "one of the greatest liabilities of life is that all too many people find themselves living amid a great period of social change and yet they fail to develop the new attitudes, the new mental responses—that the new situation demands. They end up sleeping through a revolution."[70]

There are transitional points in life and in our worldviews that can easily be recognized in hindsight. Most of us can now clearly understand the inherent value of providing individuals access to their own bible. We would be remiss if at that time we would have insisted that not everyone could have a bible. With the advent of technology, the paradigm has once again shifted. How we receive the message of the bible has and will continue to change. If individuals no longer find it advantageous to sit in a seat to be lectured to each Sunday, it is probable that it is time to engage a different paradigm to reach them. The organic and accessible nature of Natural Law provides access to all. Like

[70] James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1986), 268-269.

Wisdom and Christ, Natural Law is relational not theoretical and is accessible generationally and culturally. It provides common ground.

Universalism

It is the Universalists view that all people will eventually be saved from eternal hell. Cooper reminds us that:

> Like exclusivism and inclusivism, such a position affirms that salvation comes through Jesus Christ. At the same time, universalism differs from these other positions in its belief that people need not make a profession of faith in Christ in this lifetime (as exclusivism necessitates) or even respond appropriately to the limited revelation they may have received during their lifetime (as inclusivism stipulates).[71]

Not only will all people be saved, but all things will also be reconciled and restored. This worldview compliments Natural Law Theology nicely and provides us with an indication that God has a universal and holistic plan for creation. Interestingly enough, throughout redemptive history as displayed in the old and new testaments, there is a consistent promise and practice of restoration. Regardless of the many times the nation of Israel messed up there was always the hope of redemption. God is in the perpetual business of forgiveness and has never displayed, in theory or in practice, the spirit of abandonment.

With Universalism the focus of salvation shifts from our personal salvation, to salvation or restoration of the entire universe. [72] Universalists make the central point that

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[71] Derek Cooper, *Christianity and World Religion: An Introduction to the World's Major Faiths* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 161.

[72] Gregory McDonald, *The Evangelical Universalist,* 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 187.

because of the person and work of Christ, sin no longer sets the terms for our relationship with God, or God's relationship with us. Their practices denounces the traditional Christian belief of dualism which holds that God and Satan will rule over their respective kingdoms for eternity, and that individuals will be forever relegated to hell. The question becomes who could love a God who has the ability to save all people but is unwilling? Universalists are of the opinion that this dualism is at odds with the all-inclusive and universal work that Jesus Christ rendered to the cosmos by way of the cross.

Colossians 1:15-20, the New Testament foundational scripture for this thesis, should open our spiritual eyes to the inclusive heart of God. In these verses we are told that Jesus Christ reconciled all things to himself . . . making peace by the blood of His cross. When visualizing this peace what comes to mind is integrity, which is defined as moral uprightness, honesty, wholeness, and soundness.[73] It is in this state of wholeness that God promises salvation will be delivered. Salvation is not jerry-rigged in favor of those who say a few magic words. Universalist feel that peace is not truly peace, and wholeness is not actually whole, if some individuals are relegated to eternal incineration.

Universalists claim a long history, beginning with Clement of Alexandria (160-220), Origen (183-253), Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), George De Benneville (1703-1793). Jane Lead founded a society of Universalist called the Philadelphians in 17th Century London.[74] In 1793 Universalism emerged as a major Christian denominations in the United States and was designated The Universalist Church of America. Early American advocates of universal salvation such as Elhanan Winchester, Hosea Ballou,

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[73] *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Integrity."

[74] Ken R. Vincent, *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 41.

and John Murray taught that all souls would achieve salvation, some after a period resembling purgatory. The idea of universal salvation became so popular during the 19th century that the denomination grew to be the 6th largest in the United States. Vincent proposes that the decline of Universalism can ironically be attributed to its very success. He notes that the appeal of the Universalist message motivated mainline churches of the time to de-emphasize their message of eternal hell. Ultimately there was less incentive for people to change denominations.[75] The view that all people will be saved, irrespective of whether they have heard or responded to the Christian proclamation of redemption in Christ is the theological view that separates Universalists from other Christian denominations.

Unitarianism and Universalism developed side by side in early American culture, and shared many of the same beliefs. "Unitarianism grew up in the established churches of New England among the most well-established of its citizens. They were well placed in its society financially, and included its most literate and cultured members."[76] Universalist, on the other hand, was considered the "poor second cousin" to the Unitarians. According to Cassara, "Universalists were come-outer from many denominations; an amazingly large number came from the Baptists. They were of little education compared to the Unitarians and could not boast of a well-educated clergy."[77] This social and educational gap kept the Unitarians and Universalists apart through most of the 19th century.

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75 Vincent, *The Golden Thread*, 5.

[76] Ernest Cassara, *Universalism in America: A Documentary History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971), 5.

[77] Ibid.

In the early 20th century, the Universalist Church of America moved away from its Christian roots and took an increasingly pluralistic, interfaith view of universal salvation. In 1961, it merged with the American Unitarian Association to form the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Today, the UUA is an organization of churches whose members represent a variety of religious faiths, centered on an open-minded view of spirituality and humanistic values. Today a remnant of the Universalist Church of America survives within the interfaith Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). The UUA does not have a creed or set of theological beliefs and have explicitly rejected any form of theological orthodoxy or creed. Universalism is a way of understanding God's love as revealed through the prophets and Jesus Christ. It reflects a change of heart and doesn't require a change in denomination.[78]

> *Field note 8:* When asked if she preferred a specific denominational affiliation, Vera paused thoughtfully and responded I'm an "other." I thought I knew what I was but at this stage, I'm lost with this." When presented with the denominational options in the questionnaire she determines, "I'm unidentifiable right now. She cares about the differences in denominational affiliation, but has not studied them enough to understand what the specific differences are. When asked if she thinks God cares about her denominational affiliation Vera is quick to reply "No." She thinks God cares zero about our denominational affiliation. "He just wants us connected. Some people call it "a believer." If we're seeking, most of the finding is up to God.

Historical Foundation: Honk if You Love Jesus

To better understand the developing culture of the un-churched it was helpful to explore another time when people felt similarly disconnected from the traditional church. It did not take the researcher long to identify a similar time of spiritual disconnection; and then to connect those periods with soon to follow revivals and awakenings! It was the

[78] Vincent, The Golden Thread, 5.

simultaneous study of these spiritual movements, and their surrounding cultures that leads this thesis to investigate the Jesus People Movement of the 1960's and 1970's. The historical foundation of this thesis examines the social, political, and spiritual climate that uniquely converged to birth the Jesus People. It is theorized that the climate and factors are not so different from those being experienced in the 21st century by the un-churched.

This historical foundational research will identify major awakenings and revivals throughout history. It will discuss the problematic environments that have precipitated the need for such spiritual movements. The research explores the emergence of the Pentecostal Movement in the early 1900s, and later The Jesus People Movement of the late 1960s. The research explores the social, political, and spiritual climate that uniquely converged to birth the Jesus People. It is the hope that this historical perspective will provide insight into ways to engage the millions of un-churched individuals for the advancement of the Great Commission as identified in Matthew 28:18-20.

Awakenings and Revivals

Awakenings and revivals, for the purpose of this research, are spiritual moves of the Spirit of God. They constitute a response from God to social concerns and human issues of the times. Awakenings and revivals occur when a mixture of political, cultural, sociological, and spiritual factors reach a tipping scale within the culture. The mixtures that tip the scale differs depending on the culture and the unique time in history. Human conditions like civil rights, wars, disease, gender inequities, and pedophilia all devastate our world. God has spent a great deal of time reminding us to "fear not," yet understands

that periodically there needs to be an intervention to help us to release this accumulated stress.

Culture is a, "system of symbols, attitudes, behaviors, relationships, beliefs, and responses to the environment shared by a particular human group in contrast to others." [79] Gonzalez goes on to say, "All humans live within such systems, all humans partake of at least one culture—and often several overlapping cultural systems—and no one can claim to be free of cultural bias."[80]

Brodeur and Liebscher present revival culture as a set of values, priorities and practices that are developed and embraced to support and sustain the work of the Holy Spirit in times of spiritual revival. They describe a clash between the earthly and the heavenly realms which creates a growing hunger in the human heart for spiritual things. They further state that, "when cultural stability and spiritual receptivity are at their lowest points, revival is most likely to happen."[81] The early church experienced this dynamic. It is suggested that the early church may have actually thrived because of the persecution and martyrdom they experienced. The early church is described as, "a revival force to be dealt with until it began to be legitimized during the reign of the emperor Constantine in AD 312. Once Christianity was institutionalized as the state religion, the persecution no longer came from without but from within."[82]

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[79] Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms*, 42-43.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Michael Brodeur and Banning Liebscher, *Revival Culture: Preparing for the Next Great Awakening* (Ventura; CA: Regal, 2012), 38.

[82] Ibid.

Both McLoughlin and Waugh agree, "revivals primarily affect churches and their surrounding community, while wide scale awakening, affect the whole of society.[83] Waugh quotes Edwin Orr, a revival historian who says that "a spiritual awakening is a movement of the Holy Spirit bringing about a revival of New Testament Christianity in the church of Christ and its related community. It accomplishes the reviving of the Church, the awakening of the masses, and the movement of uninstructed people toward the Christian faith. The revived church by many or few is moved to engage in evangelism, teaching and social action."[84]

Revivals and Awakenings happened often in the scriptures. We see the following trail of renewals throughout the Old Testament:

1. Asa (2 Chron. 15:1-15);
2. Joash (2 Kings 11-12; 2 Chron. 23-24);
3. Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chron. 29-31);
4. Josiah (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chron. 34-35);
5. Haggai and Zechariah and Zerubbabel (Ezra 5-6);
6. Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 9:1-6; 12:44-47).

These revivals and awakenings share elements of rebuilding, rejoicing, recommitment, restoration, the throwing away of idols, and most importantly for this research, they resulted in a turning of the hearts of the people back to God. Likewise Waugh reminds us, "the early Christian Church lived in continuous revival. It saw rapid growth of the church by the power of the Holy Spirit from the initial outburst at

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[83] McLoughlin, *Revival , Awakening, and Reform*, xiii. Geoff Waugh, *Flashpoints of Revival: History's Mighty Revivals* (North Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009), *xxiii.*

[84] Waugh, *Flashpoints of Revival,* xxiii.

Pentecost, which saved 3,000 people. Multitudes joined the Church, amid turmoil and persecution."[85]

McLoughlin outlines the major awakenings in American history as:

- The Puritan Awakening, (1610-40);
- The First Great Awakening-In America, (1730-60);
- The Second Great Awakening, (1800-30);
- The Third Great Awakening, (1890-1920);
- The Fourth Great Awakening, (1960-90).

Noting the uniqueness of each of these five awakenings, McLoughlin also acknowledges the positive and unifying effects of each.

> The Puritan Awakening led to the beginning of constitutional monarchy in England; America's First Great Awakening led to the creation of the American republic; the Second Awakening led to the solidification of the Union and the rise of Jacksonian participatory democracy; the Third Awakening led to the rejection of unregulated capitalistic, exploitation and the beginning of the welfare state; and the Fourth Awakening was born of the blatant rejection of the exploitation of human-kind, of nature, and presented a movement toward the conservation and optimal use of the world's resources.[86]

These are monumental moves of the Holy Spirit designed to steer humankind in the direction of kingdom priorities. During times of revival, people usually develop a sudden intense enthusiasm for things of a spiritual nature. People become so preoccupied with kingdom priorities that they have very little desire to talk about anything else.

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[85] Ibid., xxv.

[86] McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakening, and Reform,* 11.

Patterns of Awakenings

In *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform* McLoughlin describes awakenings as periods when the cultural system has had to be revitalized in order to overcome jarring disjunctions between norms and experience, and between old beliefs and new realities. The periods are also inclusive of dying and emerging patterns of behavior. This process of cultural change illustrates what is called the, "pattern of revival." McLoughlin uses a blending of the works of anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace's *Revitalization Movements (1956),* and that of sociologist and anthropologist Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1968), to describe this pattern.

> Our five awakenings came about when, by the standard of our culture core and the experiences of daily life, our society deviated too far from the moral and religious understandings that legitimized authority in church and state. Not surprisingly, each of our awakenings in the past (and undoubtedly the same will hold for our current one as well) has been followed by a period of drastic (once truly revolutionary) restructuring of our social, political, and economic institutions.[87]

Using the phrase *revitalization movement,* originally coined by Wallace, McLoughlin describes these patterns of awakenings as being birthed in the midst of cultural, political and economic uncertainty. He describes four distinct stages of awakenings. In stage one, "the period of individual stress," people are described as being psychically or physically disoriented. This lack of orientation is demonstrated in outbreaks of violence against family, friends, and authority. In this stage individuals are described as being apathetic, catatonic, and incapable of functioning; it represents a general loss of identity. This general state of loss disorientation begins with a few

[87] McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakening, and Reform,* 11.

individuals, and over time becomes more pervasive. McLoughlin specifically notices that, as this sense of loss grows, the institutional bonds of society begin to snap. These so called "snaps" are manifested first within the family structure. Indicators are that spouses argue more, divorce skyrockets, and children tend to be increasingly neglected. In stage two labeled "the period of cultural distortion," political rebellion and schismatic behavior increase. Societal stresses are less manageable and normal stress reducing techniques no longer help people to cope. This of course, leads to additional dysfunction. In stage three we find the "appearance of a prophet." The prophet or leader has personally undergone a traumatic religious experience that epitomizes the crisis within the culture. Examples of these prophets or leaders within the five awakenings are Brigham Young, Aimee Semple McPherson, William Seymour, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The final or fourth stage of the revitalization movement involves the "new vision". This final stage attracts the more flexible members of the society, who are willing to experiment with new lifestyles and worldviews.

Within this four stage revitalization movement, the institutional or formal church is said to have, "*misplaced its credibility*." McLoughlin explains,

> In times of cultural stress, when institutionalized religion is unable to sustain, even among the faithful, a sense of regular communion with God in formal church rites, the distance between Creator and created becomes intolerably great; men sink in fear and loneliness. Then the pendulum swings to the pole of divine immanence (dating back, perhaps, to more primitive, animistic, or pantheistic religious feelings). God's absence from the churches is compensated for by his spiritual presence in nature; regular churchly practices begin to appear as a barrier rather than a bridge to God. People seek him elsewhere. The assumption grows that he is more readily present in the world than his priests have let on and more readily available to all."[88]

[88] McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakening, and Reform*, 12-20.

The un-churched of the 21st century fit well within stage four of this pattern. The un-churched are seeking spiritual connections that the institutional or orthodox church does not currently have the tools to facilitate. The un-churched can be identified as those flexible members of the society who are willing to experiment with new lifestyles and worldviews. The un-churched have also experienced periods of spiritual awakening. The periods between 1835 and 1860, 1885 and 1910, and 1970 and 1995 present dramatic surges in public awareness of philosophies and practices outside the spiritual teaching of the nation's churches.[89]

The Pentecostal Connection

Mark Noll indicates that one of the most important movements in the recent history of Christianity has been the emergence of Pentecostalism. In the 1900s there were very few Christians who openly experienced the gifts of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the New Testament. Noll explains that, "by the year 2010, as many as 600 million (or more than a quarter of the worldwide population of Christian adherents) could be identified as Pentecostals or charismatic."[90] Most agree that the beginning of Pentecostalism, with its characteristic practice of speaking in tongues, had its beginning in 1906 at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California.

Activities characteristic of the Pentecostal Movement include emotional fervor during praise and worship, informality, and the use of lay clergy, all of which strongly

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[89] Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious*, 23.

[90] Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity, 3rd ed*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 310.

appealed to the laboring classes. The advent of Pentecostal churches as middle-class institutions would come, not by converting members of the middle class, but by entering it *en masse* from below.[91]

The Jesus People Movement is generally associated with the Pentecostal movement because both share in the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. While this may be true, even the Pentecostals are hesitant to wholly own the Jesus People. In an attempt to clarify the relationship, Enroth, Ericson, and Peters tell us that,

> The sharing of ecstatic experience might suggest that the movement would be closer to organized Pentecostalism than to its uneasy friends in the non-charismatic establishment. But most Pentecostals are equally as confused about the rise of the Jesus People. The movement manifests the proper gifts, speaks the proper words (in English), and goes through all the motions of institutionalized Pentecostalism, but the environment is different. Gatherings are less structured, to the point of disorganization; styles are far removed from the average Assembly of God; and language, except when quoting Scripture, follows the tone of the street rather than the church. Pentecostal efforts to link up with the Jesus Movement are no less uncomfortable than that of, say, the management of Right On.[92]

They suggest that even the Pentecostals want distance between themselves and this funky and clearly unorthodox movement. Enroth notes that, Pentecostalism is popularly identified with speaking in tongues or glossolalia. Secular and religious writers have given undue emphasis to this one dimension of the movement, giving the impression that Pentecostals only speak in unknown tongues. Many Jesus People resent this lopsided image as well.[93]

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[91] Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United State* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 200.

[92] Ronald Enroth, Edward Ericson, and C. Peters, *The Jesus People: Old Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius (*Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 151.

[93] Ibid., 196-197.

A Countercultural Reaction

The field of psychology uses the *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* to describe, "an unpleasant state of tension generated when a person has two or more cognitions that are inconsistent or do not "fit together." The theory holds that people will try to reduce dissonance by changing one or more of the inconsistent cognitions, by looking for additional evidence to bolster one side or the other, or by derogating the source of one of the cognitions."[94] Americans, and particularly those coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s almost religiously pledged "allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."[95] They intrinsically understood that our Constitution was an all or nothing proposition. Either we were all equal under the law, or none of us were. They experienced the opposite of equity however play out on the cultural and political stages across the country. When there is a discrepancy between beliefs and behavior, something must change in order to eliminate the dissonance. This dissonance or discrepancy between belief and behavior created a schism in the psyche of many Americans. In an effort to balance these incompatible beliefs, some chose to reject the establishments they felt were responsible for creating the inconsistency in their reality. Their sense of disappointment was so profound that they rejected governmental, spiritual, cultural,

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[94] Stuart Oskamp and P. Wesley Schultz, *Applied Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 32.

[95] Francis Bellamy, "The Pledge of Allegiance," USHistory.org, accessed November 10, 2013, www.ushistory.org/documents/pledge.htm.

parental, and generational values. They instead turned to drugs, communes, and a new sexual freedom.

The 1960's left in its wake a collection of powerful images made more vivid by the advent of the television industry. For the first time Americans could see, up close and personal, the issues of the day being played out on the nightly news. Grave concerns with civil rights and the Viet Nam War pressed many to take a stand. Suffice it to say that the 1960s were a made for television era! We saw with our own eyes fire hoses being turned on Negro-Americans, and the National Guard advancing on students at Kent State University. Those who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s had been indoctrinated with phrases like, "with liberty and justice for all" and "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," while almost simultaneously watching the opposite play out on the nation's political stage. This inevitably created a schism within the psyche of many causing White and Black Americans alike to identify with the fight for civil rights. They intrinsically understood that our constitution was an all or nothing proposition. Either we were all equal under the law, or none of us were. In an effort to heal the schism many chose to reject their government and their churches believing that neither could be trusted. As a result of this disparity, youth turned to drugs and other sources of comfort. In the midst of these civil, political, and drug infested times, an outbreak of conservative Christianity was the last thing anyone would have predicted or expected. The emergence of the Jesus People, the offspring born of the peculiar marriage of Christianity and counterculture, was an unexpected spiritual development.

One can almost hear the smirk in his voice when Di Sabatino remarks, "alongside the Black Panthers, Peaceniks, hippies, Yippies, Weathermen, women's liberationists,

Diggers, New Leftists, and campus radicals, then, also stood the Jesus People—the forgotten children of the Spiritual Sixties."[96] Di Sabatino also draws our attention to five hallmarks of the Jesus People and the ensuing Movement.

- Salvation through an experience of faith in Jesus Christ;
- Adherence to the literal interpretation of the Bible;
- Being eschatologically motivated (they had an expectation of the Second Coming of Christ within their lifetime);
- A reawakening of the church which had lost its foundations (This loss was attributed primarily to institutionalization and the preference for dogma over spontaneity);
- They were spiritual experimentalists (priority was placed on spiritual gifts).[97]

Americans born between 1946 and 1964 were deeply affected by the social upheavals, affluence, gender revolution, and civil rights issues of the time. The baby boomer generation, the largest generation ever in America, were different than prior generations. Most boomers valued experience over belief. They generally distrusted institutions and leaders, and were more interested in personal fulfillment than in community. This countercultural time in American history was represented by a general sense of rebellion by the youth. It was a turbulent time resulting in heavy drug use, and a butting of heads and hearts. Many young Americans no longer agreed with their country, or their parents. They no longer cared to carry on the traditions that had been so carefully preserved for them. They were quite willing to disagree with a culture that preached

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[96] David Di Sabatino, *The Jesus People Movement: An Annotated Bibliography and General Resource*, 2nd ed. (Lake Forest, CA: Jester Media, 2004), 5.

[97] Ibid., 6-7.

racial purity. They had learned that lesson from the recent Hitler/Nazi experience. They were willing to drop out and experience life differently than the life proposed by their parents and grandparents. It was a time of free love, women's rights, sit-ins, campus riots, and dodging of the draft.

A heavy sense of opposition to the establishment was being lived out on the streets of America. Regardless of what the establishment proposed, the youth were not having it, whatever "it" was. The so called Jesus Freaks developed their own ideologies, which included advocating for peace and brotherhood. Additionally, they had their own music and their own "groovy" language. They were clearly countercultural.

In *Revival Culture,* Brodeur and Liebscher paint the picture of collisions between historic traditions and new perspectives, left-wing and right-wing political structures, older and younger generations, social classes, races and cultures. They further suggest that, "when we take a closer look, we see that the majority of social earthquakes have been accompanied or immediately followed by a wonderful work of the Holy Spirit, which we have come to call revival."[98] The Jesus People Movement represented a generalized wave of reformation. Of this period Edward Plowman says:

> The first time I saw it happening I just couldn't believe it was the real thing. Hippies reading the Bible and praying? Yet there they were—in the storefront coffeehouse some ministers had opened near the intersection of Haight and Ashbury in San Francisco. I hung around, listened, watched, asked questions. What I saw and heard dispelled my doubts about these wild looking young people and the sincerity of their belief. Drugs didn't seem to matter anymore; they said Jesus Christ had given them a better high (euphoria). They spoke freely of their new love for God. They loved the Bible. They loved each other. In that electric atmosphere of vibrant unselfishness. I had a strange feeling they loved me.[99]

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[98] Brodeur and Liebscher, *Revival Culture*, 36.

[99] Edward E. Plowman, *The Jesus Movement in America* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing Company, 1971), 9.

Leadership from Within

Many youth throughout the history of the church have objected to their lack of opportunity within the institutional walls of the church. They express that they are undervalued and overlooked because of their age. Others sense that the best jobs within the church are given to the older members because they have higher salaries, and give more financially to the local church. They find very little incentive to remain once they enter their late teens and early twenties. In The *Far-Out Saints of the Jesus Communes,* Ward proudly acknowledges the leadership style of the Jesus People Movement as being one of the most interesting components of the Movement. He sees the purposeful training of young leaders as both unique and vital to the life of the Movement. According to Ward, nearly three thousand young people have gone through the training and been given the responsibility of running a small commune. This training and leadership model has exposed young leaders to,

> Internal administration, snotty noses, city ordinances, entrenched status quo leaders in the church and out, irate parents, adolescent tantrums and depression, landlords, neighbors, plumbers, bill collectors; they have developed their charismatic talents that enabled them to be selected by small groups as leaders in the first place; they know where it's "at" and many of them have it together.[100]

Ward heralds this leadership model and notes that, close to 800 Jesus houses have their own homegrown leaders, who were chosen by the inhabitants. He concludes that, "The Jesus People Movement—and Christianity—are inheriting an army of leaders."[101]

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[100] Hiley H. Ward, *The Far-Out Saints of the Jesus Communes: A Firsthand Report and Interpretation of the Jesus People Movement* (New York, NY: Association Press, 1972), 47-48.

[101] Ward, *The Far-Out Saints of the Jesus Communes*, 48.

The International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements documents the leadership, growth and development of Calvary Chapel, a congregation in Costa Mesa, CA. The congregation, headed by Chuck Smith, reached prominence as an offshoot of the Jesus People revival. What was originally a congregation of twenty-five members began to grow as a result of Smith's openness to a variety of young people in the counterculture of Southern California. Through the implementation of Bible studies, disciplined prayer, and concern for hippies, drug addicts, societal dropouts, and those on the fringe of the culture, the congregation in 1971 purchased a ten acre campus with an auditorium which seats 2,500. Burgess and van der Maas comment, "new converts were encouraged to share their experience with others. At the same time, they were put into relationships with more mature Christians and were led through a range of Bible studies. As these converts matured, they were encouraged to launch out in ministry. The result is that Calvary Chapel has grown to 35,000 members, making it the largest congregation in the world."[102]

Larry Eskridge documents Billy Graham's introduction and support of the Jesus People Movement. Eskridge describes Graham's initial exposure to the group on New Year's Day in 1971. As the grand marshal of that year's Rose Bowl Parade, evangelist Billy Graham described his own mental and spiritual sense as that of "being of two minds." He describes feeling a sense of grandeur and a sense of profound decadence, almost simultaneously. As he and his wife Ruth waved to the crowds, Graham remembers that, he watch(ed) the horizon for revival to restore America's spiritual

[102] Burgess, Stanley M. and Eduard M. van der Mass, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 453.

greatness."[103] At some point, Graham began to notice that, "a number of young people were holding up placards that contained messages such as "God is love" and standing, "with raised index fingers lifted upward," shouting "one way!" The Grahams were made dramatically aware that a brand-new spiritual awakening had arrived. He describes suppressing the urge to hop off of the float, get into the street, and to join them. What Graham actually did was to return the gesture and begin shouting, "One way—the Jesus way!"[104] Graham would go on to incorporate the "Jesus Revolution" as a central motif in his domestic Crusades in 1971 and 1972. Evangelists like Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and Kathryn Kuhlman would build on this movement by continuing to engage the youth of America on campuses throughout the United States. Enroth documents the alliance between the Jesus Movement and Kathryn Kuhlman. He notes that, in a series of telecasts made in late summer 1971, the Kuhlman ministry, awkwardly but publically, joined hands with the saints of the movement.

> Standing among Chuck Smith ("Daddy Chuck," she called him), Lonnie Frisbee, and Duane Pederson, "Mama Kathryn" displayed an unconcealed eagerness to identify with the movement, despite an incredible ignorance of it. Her attachment to the popularity of the young movement was unmistakable—"I'm one of you, too; I'm part of the Jesus Movement, too"— and proud—"We're in it together; I'm so glad to be a part of it.[105]

The Movement received wide press coverage in 1971. Articles appeared in Look (February 9), Life (May 14), Time (June 21), and there were several articles on the front

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[103] Larry Eskridge, "One way: Billy Graham the Jesus Generation and the Idea of an Eevangelical Youth Culture," Church History 67, no. 1 (March 1998): 83, Academic Search Premier, accessed April 24, 2013, EBSCOhost, 83.

[104] Ibid., 83-84.

[105] Enroth, *The Jesus People,* 151-152.

page of the Chicago Tribune.[106] Many criticize those in the Movement for their lack of sound doctrine. In the book of Revelations, chapter 2 the church at Ephesus is praised for its intolerance of false doctrine and evildoers, yet they are admonished for abandoning the love that they began with. They are encouraged to return to their first love, which for the Christian is their love of Christ. The Jesus People talked of "love" and "peace" and of "being cool man." They pooled their resources to create a community of concerned individuals. The criticism around the soundness of their doctrine does not compare with the heart that the Jesus People displayed. This recreated heart prompted them to returning to their first love and to put Christ before doctrine. We are reminded that, "following the Third Great Awakening, Social Gospel reformers had spoken of Jesus as *the first Social Gospeler,* while humanists spoke of him as *the first socialist*. In the Fourth Awakening many have called Jesus *the first hippie*, because, he wore long hair, the eminent symbol of a reforming or counterculture hero.[107]

The Jesus People Today

Blinded by the Right tells the story of Betsy Jackson's conversion to Christianity. She came from a middleclass, Democratic background. The article indicates that by the mid-sixties Jackson had rejected her parent's life, discovered drugs, and set out to create a new world, different than that of her parents. She and her friends dressed differently, and lived communally. Jackson says of herself, "I was very left, I mean left, left, left, as

[106] Richard M. Riss, *A Survey of 20thCentury Revival Movements in North America* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 149.

[107] McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakenings, and Reform*, 211.

far as you could get."[108] Her conversion to Christianity seemed to change her political views. Within a few years she was voting Republican. Luhrmann notes that, "We know that most evangelicals are now vehemently right-wing, and that most hippies were decidedly not. They seem to have been largely apolitical or, like Betsy Jackson, on the left."[109] According to the article, a 2004 survey of more than eight hundred former hippie Christians found that only 22% thought of themselves as politically conservative back in the 1960s, whereas 57% have since come to describe themselves that way. The article indicates that abortion may have been one of the deciding issue dividing hippie Christians and their former counter cultural past. Evangelical pastor, Ken Wilson when asked why the Jesus People had become conservative, without hesitation replied, "abortion." He goes on to explain that once a conservative position is taken on abortion, people then tended to take conservative positions on a whole array of additional issues like marriage and homosexuality. Jackson concludes, "her church, Calvary Chapel, never preached politics from the pulpit, she says they only taught values." She quickly concedes that teaching values indirectly told her how to vote.[110] Luhrmann believes that this may not be the only explanation for the seemingly big change from liberal to conservative. He suggests that they [The Jesus People] never really changed—because "hippies hated the government and anything that smacked of the establishment, just as many evangelicals do today." Some believe that what began as the Jesus People ended up as today's Tea Party.

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[108]T.M. Luhrmann, "Blinded by the Right? How Hippie Christians Begat Evangelical Conservatives," accessed April 12, 2013, *Harper Magazine,* 39.

[109] Ibid., 40.

[110] Ibid., 43.

Conclusion

We exist in a society swirling with devastation, change and uncertainty. We like to believe that we are all able to manage this stress. Wisdom reveals that no one truly manages this stress monster. The history of the church can be summarized as, "a series of ideological, cultural, economic, political and religious stress points that build up over a period of time and eventually produced an upheaval. Brodeur and Liebscher identify this as the "seismic theory of revival.

Today similar issues influence the role that faith plays within society. They extend to issues of terrorism, climate devastation, and the rise of mass shootings. Given these challenges, we find that issues of the 21st century are not very different than those of the 20th century. Awakenings emerge against a backdrop of spiritual and moral decline. During revival and times of awakening, the culture receives an infusion of spiritual life. Multitudes become new believers, and those who are already believers enter more deeply into the fullness of the faith. The Day of Pentecost, each of the Great Awakenings, and the Jesus Movement were unexpected, sudden and revolutionary. They impacted large numbers of people, and the cultures around them. So it will be in our time with the un-churched as we seek to tip the scale towards revival.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Research Strategy

The study engages ethnography as its central research strategy. This ethnographic strategy allows the researcher to explore and examine the tacit culture of the un-churched. It also allows the researcher to develop an intimate familiarity with the dilemmas, frustrations, routines, relationships, and risks that are a part of the everyday lives of the un-churched. This cultural immersion is considered fieldwork and permits the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the people, and the broader context within which they exist.

The following eleven research questions are being posed. Who are the un-churched? Do they have a unique internal culture? What can we tell about their culture? How intentional was their decision to not attend church? What is the likelihood of their returning? How is denominational affiliation perceived? How do the un-churched practice their spirituality? What aspects of spirituality do they admire in others? Is community service important to them? What types of spiritual settings are needed? What are the influences affecting their views of the traditional church? Saldana notes that it is

the nature of the central and related research questions that should influence the coding choices made later in the research process.

The Culture of Ethnography

Ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people.' According to Harris and Johnson, "an ethnography is a written description of a particular culture – the customs, beliefs, and behavior – based on information collected through fieldwork."[1] It focuses on the development of individual and shared views, as well as identifying the values of a particular culture. Ethnography seeks to describe the cultural knowledge of the participants.[2] One of the principal characteristic of ethnography is that it is rooted in the concept of culture. "The end product of ethnography—the story or narrative—constitutes a theoretically informed interpretation of the culture of the community, group, or setting. Ethnography generates or builds theories of cultures—or explanations how people think, believe, and behave—that are situated in local time and space."[3] So, "it is to groups that the ethnographer attends, or, if to individuals, to individuals as standing for the group, in some ways like all of its members, in some ways like some of its members, in some ways like no other member."[4] Wolcott also indicates that, culture refers to the ways different

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[1] Marvin Harris and Orna Johnson, *Cultural Anthropology*, 5th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 23.

[2] Frances Maggs-Rapport, "Combining Methodological Approaches in Research: Ethnography and Interpretive Phenomenology," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 2000, 21:1, 219-225.

[3] LeCompte, Margaret D. and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: Ethnographer's Toolkit 1* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1999), 8.

[4] Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing.* 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 249.

groups go about their lives, and to the belief systems associated with their behavior.[5] Developing the concept of culture within this study will help to create a logical, cohesive pattern for the behaviors and ideas that characterize the un-churched. The ethnographic design encourages the use of up close and personal tools and techniques to better understand the culture being studied. The data will be presented in the form of quotations, descriptions, and excerpts that ultimately result in a comprehensive picture of the culture of the un-churched.[6] The research attempts to identify the attitudinal and subjective beliefs and customs shared by this group. This study is designed to better understand who these people are as individuals, and as representatives of a culture bearing group.

Participant observation is sometimes used as an umbrella term to describe everything that ethnographers do. In this unique position the participant observer becomes an instrument through which data is collected. This collection of relevant data is made possible through the researcher's observations and her ongoing interactions with the un-churched. The research is designed to permit the ethnographer to blend into the un-churched environment, while maintaining objectivity. Ethnography with its roots in anthropology, no longer requires the researcher to travel to remote locations for extended periods of time. The ethnography can be of an entire group, or a subset of a group. It focuses on developing a complex, and complete description of the culture of the group being studied.[7]

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[5] Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*, 22.

[6] Michael Genzuk, "A Synthesis of Ethnographic Research," *Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research (Eds.)* University of Southern California (Fall 2003), accessed February 2, 2014, http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~genzuk/Ethnographic_Research.pdf, 2.

[7] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013), 91.

"There is increased recognition that cultural and social phenomena are ripe for ethnographic study everywhere we find humans."[8] According to Wolcott fieldwork, "Involves the study of human beings in social interaction . . . it involves (literally) research in which the numbers are small, the relationships complex, and nothing occurs exactly the same way twice."[9] The term ethnography can also be used to describe any fieldwork that is not specifically interviewing.[10] The final written product, also called an ethnography draws its data primarily from this fieldwork. Genzuk notes that:

> Participant observation is an omnibus field strategy in that it simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection. In participant observation the researcher shares as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the people in the observed setting…such participation is to develop an insider's view of what is happening. This means that the researcher not only sees what is happening, but "feels" what it is like to be part of the group.[11]

The problem this research addresses is that people are detaching from traditional church environments. As this demographic grows the un-churched are becoming a nation unto themselves. The purpose of this ethnographic study is to better understand the subculture of the un-churched, by exploring the meaning they ascribed to their personal experiences with the church, and with God. The hypothesis holds that engaging the un-churched will provide insights into ways to spiritually engage them. As mentioned, the context for this project is the North Windham Jazzercise Studio located in eastern

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[8] Julian Murchison, *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 9.

[9] Harry F. Wolcott, *The Art of Fieldwork* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1995), 19.

[10] Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*, 47.

[11] Genzuk, A Synthesis of Ethnographic Research, 2.

Connecticut. The researcher is a member and an active participant. Ten un-churched women will be interviewed. Open ended questions will be designed to allow the participants to reflect back on their experiences, and to gain insight into what they need to grow spiritually. The study will use the qualitative methods approach to action research. Interviews, journals entries, context associate feedback, along with the researcher's personal observations, in the form of field notes and journal entries, will capture and describe the subjective reasons that have prompted so many to leave their traditional church environments.

This qualitative study will use the ethnographic research approach because, it allows for identification and interpretation of shared group patterns. These patterns include emerging beliefs, and other culture-sharing attributes the un-churched may be experiencing. The typical model for ethnographic research includes diverse and multicultural perspectives. Multicultural perspectives are a valuable component because they allow multiple realities to be validated. The ethnographic approach advocates that the subjective reality that each individual sees is no less real than an objectively defined and highly measured reality.[12]

Purposefully engaging the researchers' already existing role of *participant observer* will provide access to some of the hidden issues and concerns of the un-churched. The role of participant observer is designed to open doors to the attitudes, behaviors, and patterns unique to the group. It is designed to promote free flowing feedback and to identify spiritual connections and gaps in the lives of these individuals.

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[12] David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2010), 5.

The research will utilize the informal interview process. When done well, informal interviewing feels like natural conversational dialogue. Informal interviews differs from conversation although they typically merge to form a mixture of conversation and embedded questions.[13] Data will be presented in a descriptive, storytelling narrative. It will invite the reader to see through the eyes of the ethnographer, what the ethnographer has observed and experienced. Inferences will be formed, and the ensuing themes will provide structure to the findings. As a participant observer the researcher will personalize the interpretation with observational statements like, "this is what I saw" or "this is how I was affected.[14] The study will paint a picture of the perceived influences growing and shaping the culture of the un-churched.

Triangulation of the Data

Triangulation is used in qualitative research to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. The practice encourages the use of data from at least three dissimilar sources. The goal of triangulation is to assist in creating a complete picture of the phenomenon being studied. The different types of triangulation methods include environmental triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation.[15] This study will a combination of theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. Theory triangulation, "brings together

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[13] Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 41.

[14] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 198.

[15] Lisa A. Guion, "Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies," *University of Florida Extension*, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (September 2002), 1.

people from different disciplines … it is believed that individuals from different disciplines or positions bring different perspectives. Therefore if each evaluator from different disciplines interprets the information in the same way (draws the same conclusions), then validity is established."[16] The diversity of disciplines represented by the team of Context Associates makes theory triangulation an excellent choice. In addition, methodological triangulation will be used. It involves the use of multiple methods to verify data results. The multiple methods used in this research project are interviews, web-based surveys, field notes, and feedback from the weekly spiritual discussion group. If the conclusions from each of the methods are the same or similar, then validity is considered to be strengthened. Methodological triangulation allows for the stripping away of alternative explanations, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings.[17] It also supports the emergence of patterns that inform the research and helps to describe and define the culture of the group being studied.[18] Denzin reminds us that using a combination of triangulation methods allows the researcher to achieve the best of each method, while overcoming the deficiencies of each.[19] The use of different stakeholders (theory triangulation), as well as different collection methods, (methodological triangulation) will add to the trustworthiness of the research findings.

According to Guion the researcher triangulates, "by looking for outcomes that are agreed upon by all stakeholder groups. The shared weight of the evidence suggests that if every stakeholder, who is looking at the issue from different points of view, sees an

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[16] Guion, *Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies,* 2.

[17] Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 94.

[19] Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1978).

outcome then it is more likely to be a true outcome."[20] Data will be triangulated as follows:

*The Un-churched Interview/Questionnaire: (*Appendix C) will be utilized to assess the experiences of ten un-churched Jazzercise individuals. These are women between the ages of forty-one and seventy.

The Context Associate Interview/Questionnaire: (Appendix C) has been developed to collect data from five un-churched Context Associates. These individuals have read the first four chapters of the thesis. They have also contributed their opinions and expertise to the project. They come from a diversity of backgrounds. Their online survey will consist of the same series of open-ended questions used in the face to face interviews.

Field notes: The researcher has been keeping a personal journal of observations over the past three years. These field notes will be used to validate the data and will be disbursed throughout the writing.

Lincoln and Guba describe the trustworthiness of a qualitative study in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.[21] Conformability is the process of examining and comparing data gathered from multiple data collection sources. Dependability refers to the repeatability of the study. While it is not expected that any study can be done exactly the same way twice, the researcher will attempt to clearly describe each situation. This clarity will increase another researcher's ability to understand exactly what went on in the study environment. Providing a clear

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[20] Guion, *Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies*, 1.

[21] Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985), 300.

understanding of the research environment will increase dependability. Transferability addresses the degree to which the results can be generalized or transferred to another context or setting. Transferability for this project will be enhanced by clearly describing the settings and the key players. This descriptive narrative will provide information that allows others to make reasonable generalizations as to the transferability of the findings.

Credibility for this project will be enhanced by allowing the participants to read their interview transcript. They will have the opportunity to read their interview transcript and to provide feedback or make any changes to the interview data. This step increases the credibility of the findings because the participants were given the opportunity to confirm and clarify their contribution to the study.[22]

Data Collection

The first data collection source are the ten un-churched women from the Jazzercise Studio. They were interviewed about their church experiences, as well as about how they currently connect spiritually to God, and to their communities. These women have casual relationships with the researcher. The relationship is casual in that we see one another two or three times in the Jazzercise Studio each week. Each woman was interviewed individually. The interviews took place in the home of the researcher, and lasted an average of one and one half hours. These interviews allowed information to be gathered directly from the respondents in a comfortable, face-to-face, and confidential environment.

[22] Guion, *Triangulation: Establishing the Validity of Qualitative Studies*, 1.

The following introduction was read to each interviewee:

> As you may remember my name is Stephanie Wilson. I am a doctoral candidate at United Theological Seminary where I am studying the un-churched. I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. The information collected will become a part of my doctoral thesis. Real names will be changed to provide confidentiality.

Following this introduction the *Informed Consent Statement* (Appendix B) was given to the interviewee. The form identifies the project, the researcher and the supporting academic institution. At the bottom of this Statement is a section designed to gather demographic information or attribute codes about the individual. This information includes name, age, and occupation. All participants are female and so gender information did not need to be collected. The participants indicated their consent to be interviewed by signing this Statement. Each interview was taped and documented using a Livescribe Smartpen. The Smartpen captures and uploads the interview electronically. The Smartpen gave the researcher the freedom to focus on listening and participating. In addition, a small backup tape recorder was used.

Individuals were each asked the same series of open-ended questions (Appendix C). This series of grand tour and mini-tour questions are designed to define the boundaries of the study; to paint a broad picture of the participant's world; to map the cultural terrain of the un-churched; and to probe their subjective experiences. Survey or grand tour questions shape and inform a global understanding, while specific or mini-tour questions refine and expand that understanding.[23] There was the need to ask follow-up questions that were not on the Interview Questionnaire. These were questions that were

[23] Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, 44.

not obvious when the instrument was created, but sprang from the interview conversations. These follow-up questions allow the Ethnographer to ask pertinent questions in order to keep the interview flowing. The interviewee was given a copy of their signed Informed Consent Statement, along with a copy of the questions that were asked, for their records. As mentioned, once interviews were transcribed each participant was allowed two weeks to add or delete from their interview data. Interview transcripts were read and verified by 100% of the participants before being coded and integrated into the research findings.

The second data collection source came from the five Context Associates. These Associates were asked the same series of open-ended questions outlined in Appendix C. Their survey was designed and administered electronically through SoGoSurvey.com. According to Rea and Parker, "the web based survey is useful in reaching specialized or well-identified populations whose e-mail addresses are available."[24] They were selected to participate as Context Associates because many of them were un-churched during the years that the Ethnographer attended church. They are friends of the researcher who are similarly unchurched. These Associates have engaged the researcher over the years, in discussions around issues pertaining to spirituality. The use of these Associates supports theory triangulation because the group is comprised of professionals from a variety of disciplines. One is a security guard in a penal facility, while another is a retired diversity director. The group also includes a University of Connecticut payroll supervisor, a nutritionist, and a middle school music teacher. All Associates, are aware of the writer's involvement and departure from her local church. Each received hardcopies of the

[24] Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker, *Designing & Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide,* 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 11.

foundational research in September of 2013. Some have read the entire written project, while others have only read select portions. Context Associates were selected because they were interest in the topic, because they themselves were un-churched, or because they were available to participate.

Field notes provide the third triangulation source. Field notes are written, typed, or taped observations made by the ethnographer concerning what has occurred in specific settings within the context of the project. While similar to journaling Myers cautions that, field notes are not exactly the same as journal entries.[25] Journal records are more subjective and researcher focused. They document the researcher's personal experiences as he or she becomes immersed in the culture being studied. Field notes, on the other hand, are a tool that describes in writing what actually took place. Field notes capture the environmental feel of a particular setting or event.

The Ethnographer used field notes to describe incidents that did not happen. Describing incidents that did not happen may assist the reader in better understanding how the ethnographer thinks. For example, the reader may benefit from a field note describing why a certain person was not chosen to be interviewed. In such an entry describing why something did not happen can be a way to provide an understanding of the cultural environment that the ethnographer is experiencing as it is being experienced. These observations will be used to support emerging patterns as they develop.

In addition, the researcher is one of four women who gather for two hours each Monday to discuss issues of a spiritual nature. This group has been meeting now for well over one year. Three of us are un-churched, while one attends church somewhat

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[25] William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer in the Doctor of Ministry Program,* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 2000), 44-45.

regularly. The group emerged from our connection to the exercise studio. Two of these women are also Context Associates.

A key actor or *key informant* is an individual who provides key or historical information about the group being studied. These are individuals who provide valuable connections that are advantageous to the research. Working with both Amber and Andrea has provided insights into the culture of the un-churched. It was Andrea and Amber who initiated the Monday night discussion group. They have proven to be helpful and open guide to the un-churched community.

Ethical Considerations

The ESRC Framework for Research Ethics states that valid consent consists of the following core components.

- Research subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails, and what risks, if any, are involved.
- Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion.[26]

The participants of this study will be assured of the quality and integrity of the research in the following ways. The researcher will provide a Consent Statement to each individual being interviewed. The statement will allow for an understanding of the project and its purposes.

[26] ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) 2010, Updated September 2012, accessed December 9, 2013, www.esrc.ac.uk/about-esrc/information/research-ethics.aspx.

Participant consent was treated as a process. The participants have given their verbal and written consent and were allowed to withdraw at any point before, during, and after their interview. Participants were assured that their identity would be changed, and that their interview data would not be misrepresented. They were also given their transcribed interview, before they were integrated into the research findings.

Project Coding

Coding is a way of sorting the data that has been collected. It involves identifying places in the dataset that speak to a specific idea, concept, or theme. The main goal of coding is to facilitate the retrieval of data segments in categories useable for discussion. Codes are organizing principles that are not set in stone. They are the researchers own creation, in that the researcher identifies and builds the codes. Codes are tools to think with and can be expanded, changed, or scrapped as ideas develop through the researchers repeated interaction with the data. Creating categories is a way of beginning to read and think about the data in a systematic and organized way.[27] This is the heuristic nature of coding. As the data is developed and condensed, the ethnographer gains a better understanding of the themes and patterns within the data.

Miles and Huberman argue that coding is a process that enables the researcher to identify meaningful data, and that coding sets the stage for interpreting and drawing

[27] Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2013), 39-40.

conclusions from the data.[28] Codes are used to link the raw data collected by way of interviews, web surveys, field notes, and journal entries, to identified research problems. Resulting in a descriptive narrative.[29] The initial coding cycle began by identifying the broadest categories imaginable. For example this study asks participants, "What did you like least about going to church?" Possible codes for this question could be, "took too much time," "not interesting," "didn't like the people," or "feeling unfulfilled." Answers given by respondents were coded similarly with the objective of uncovering themes and theories about what they like least about going to church. Each interview was organized and similarly coded into categories or "families" because they shared certain concepts. Patterns emerged from the coded data that was then be connected to themes, patterns and theories.

The codes for this research were systematically coded using ATLAS.ti a qualitative research data base program. Since the number of codes can quickly accumulate and change, the researcher maintained a codebook that kept record of the emerging codes as they were created and modified. Once the interviews were coded they were refined and grouped in ways that produced patterns, concepts, and themes that facilitated the emergence of theories about the un-churched population and their culture.

Creating codes to identify chunks of the data allows for related patterns to develop. Coding provides a shorthand synthesis for making comparisons between different people, events, and across data collection sources. Codes may be associated

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[28] Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook.* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014).

[29] Myers, *Research in Ministry,* 74.

with participant-observation, interviews, surveys, and field notes. The codes then becomes the mechanism by which the ethnographer can discuss the findings.[30]

There is a heuristic nature to the coding of qualitative data. A heuristic is a mental shortcut that allows us to solve problems and make judgments in a quicker and sometimes more efficient manner. These rule-of-thumb strategies shorten decision-making time and allow people to function without constantly stopping to think about their next course of action. While heuristics can speed up our problem and decision-making processes, they can also introduce errors and lead to biases. Just because something has worked in the past does not mean that it will work again, and relying on an existing heuristic can make it difficult to see alternative solutions. For this reason it is important to provide second and third looks at the data to confirm the validity of the connections being made. The heuristic nature of coding allows the data to inform the research. Patterns, themes, and theories are uncovered as the coding is allowed to develop and to flow. Johnny Saldana explains the heuristic nature of coding as, a method of discovery that stimulates your thinking about the data you are collecting and reviewing.[31]

Coding for this thesis took place in a cyclical fashion. The First Cycle of coding produced a Codebook (Appendix E). A Codebook is a compilation of all of the codes, their description, and a brief data reference. The second cycle of coding, represented in table 8 consolidated the Code Book into twenty categories. The third and final cycle collapsed those twenty categories into seven themes and patterns as outlined in table 9.

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[30] Murchison, Ethnographic Essentials, 178-179.

[31] Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 39-40.

Given that each qualitative study is unique, the methods used to analyze them are unique as well. There are many types of coding that can be used to better develop and understand the data. Saldana cautions that it is the nature of the central and related research questions that should influence the coding choices being made. This study will use the following five coding types to categorize the data.

- "*In Vivo Codes* uses the direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher-generated words and phrases." These are codes that honor the voices of those being studied. They are used to ground the analysis in the language of those interviewed. These codes help to uncover the voices of those being marginalized.[32]
- *Attribute Coding* is appropriate for all qualitative studies, but particularly for those with multiple participants and sites, as well as studies with a wide variety of data forms. These codes are used to provide essential participant information like age, race and occupation.
- *Emotion Codes* attempt to identify the emotions experienced and recalled by the participant. "Since emotions are a universal human experience, our acknowledgement of them in our research provides deep insights into the participants' perspectives, world views, and life conditions."[33] While some dismiss emotions as being unimportant or immature, emotions are used to form subjective judgements about people and events.

[32] Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers,* 61.

[33] Ibid., 106.

- *Values Codes* place the spotlight on the values, attitudes, and beliefs represented in the data.[34]
- *Versus Codes* are good for policy studies, evaluation research, critical analysis, and qualitative data sets that suggest strong conflicts or competing goals within, among, and between participants. This coding identifies in binary terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, processes and concepts, etc., in direct conflict with each other. [35] These codes can be useful to identify, compare and contrast the cultures of the churched and the un-churched.
- *Descriptive Codes* are those that summarize in a word or a short phrase the basic message of the passage. Descriptive coding is foundational to qualitative inquiry, and assists the reader in seeing what the researcher saw, and to hear what the researcher heard.

[34] Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers,* 110.

[35] Ibid., 115.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The interviews were held on the patio of the researcher's home in North Windham, CT. This proved to be idyllic and each participant seemed very comfortable. The researcher's home is located in the eastern part of the State of CT. The complex itself is very small and is surrounded by an underdeveloped wooded area teaming with families of birds. Interviews took place in the summer of 2014. The temperature hovered between eighty and ninety degrees. Feeling the breeze, and hearing the birds provided a conducive environment for the interviews. A large bowl of fruit and a pitcher of lemonade graced the table. The interviewees were given a few moments to complete the Consent Form and were made aware of the two recording mechanisms being used to gather the interview data. Each interview began with the following statement: *Being un-churched for the purposes of this research is defined as not having attended church in the past six months with the exception of weddings, funerals, and other special events. I understand that you are un-churched by this definition?*

Faces of the Un-churched

Angela [redacted] is a sixty-something African American woman who describes herself as a scientist and an educator. She has been un-churched now for well over fifteen years. Angela's mother and aunts ran the neighborhood restaurant that was central to the community they lived in. She was raised in a Metropolitan African Methodist Church in Miami, Florida and recounts how integral that church was to her life growing up. She recalls that going to church was something she enjoyed doing. Angela recalls coming of age [age 5 or 6] and being deemed old enough to walk to Sunday school unescorted. Her mother, of course, would watch from the corner as she took that all important walk each Sunday morning. Her mother, aunts, and great aunts also attended but would come for the church portion each Sunday. Angela expresses that she felt uniquely nurtured. She recalls having had many great teachers who brought the bible and biblical principles to life for her. She states "we were crazy about Mildred, because she developed and worked with us." She comments that initially, as a child she really liked the learning environment and that it was engaging. "Sunday school was all about the learning." As for church she notes "you don't go to Sunday school and not stay for church." As a teen-ager it was the ancillary things about church that she enjoyed. Things like being with her peer in youth group activities, [i.e. League] or participating in church service as a Junior Usher. She explains that by then "church was the place to go because my friends were there." Angela felt very comfortable within her church, as a whole, and within her peer group specifically.

Angela recognizes her mom as being her primary instructor. Growing up she was taught biblical principles by her mother, as well as by the church. She indicates that one

reinforced the other. The church would teach certain biblical principles, but her mother was always her primary teacher when it came to the practical application of those principles. Angela says “I asked her everything. She was great that way.” She reminisces that most everything her mom did was holistic and that the biblical principles taught in church were reinforced in her home in a practical way. They ultimately became practical life experiences that she is still gleaning from today. Angela recalls that her mother didn’t reject anything and that “everything she was exposed to she used in her everyday life.” This is how Angela came to better understand biblical principles and how to integrate them into her practical, daily life experiences. Even today Angela describes experiencing teachable moments because of the way her mother engaged her. Someone may say something, or talk about a certain biblical principle, and Angela is able to tie it back to something her mom had demonstrated, or that they had discussed. Angela says her mom “walked the walk, and talked the talk . . . she was the real deal.” Angela learned very early that many people say they’re spiritual but are not practicing that spirituality. She notes “one does not necessarily have anything to do with the other.”

Angela went on to do her undergraduate work at Talladega College in Alabama and notes that because it was a traditional black university “even if I didn’t want to go to church, and thought that I was ‘all that,’ I still went because it was mandatory and the repercussions of not going were punitive . . . if students didn’t go to church on Sunday, it was known that you didn’t go, and there were consequences.”

She completed graduate work at Howard University where Angela was awarded a Ph.D. in cell biology. In 1965 and 1966, while still in graduate school, Angela gave birth to her sons. Although living in Washington, DC she was still a member of her local

church in Miami. During her graduate school years Angela recalls that she and her peer "found churches to go to . . . we thought it was important and we found places to worship." They would go to one church and find out that they didn't like the message, or that the people there didn't seem very welcoming. She indicates that because it was important they explored until they "found what felt right."

Angela did not make an intentional decision to become unchurched. She says that it just happened over time, and explains it as evolutionary in the sense that as she grew and truly understood what religion was; she knew that she didn't need to go to church. She goes on to explain that in terms of everything she had learned over time, she knew "she didn't have to go to church to be spiritual, or to talk to God. She describes this understanding as "growing in fruition, a sort of evolutionary epiphany."

When her kids came along Angela felt it was her parental responsibility to expose them to certain aspects of social life. For this reason she took them to church. She equates this exposure to be like the many other things she exposed her children to as they developed. Angela says "when I thought they were old enough to know what church was, I didn't feel that I needed to go with them any longer." There were special events periodically brought her back to church, like her oldest son's wedding, but gradually she discovered she didn't have to go to church for anything spiritual. She muses that maybe "the whole notion of getting dressed, and getting the kids ready had to do with it" but acknowledges that "the church was not that great of an attraction to me. . . . going was not a priority." Angela concludes that church had little or nothing to offer her. She understands real spirituality to be "integrated, interwoven, and a part of the fabric of our lives, it's who we are." She insists that spirituality is "practical and practicing, not just

espoused. It's a total practice, a way of life, and not something you can pick up at a church."

Angela explains that the people she admires spiritually have a respect for the beliefs of others. "They don't feel threatened by someone who believes differently than they do. They're able to engage without having the need to get their listener to agree." She feels that "even an argument is at least a conversation" and that "it's when you cut people off and say 'no, you don't know what you're talking about' that it becomes offensive." Angela contends "there are lots of ways to be respectful of other people's faith without believing exactly what they believe. When Christians talk to you they don't even really listen. They're waiting for that pause so they can jump in and reel you in…it's almost comical if it weren't so offensive and disrespectful." Angela understands that faith looks different on different people and insists "you know 'it' when you see 'it' . . . whatever 'it' is, and however they got it, they believe it so deeply that it becomes an integral part of their being. You know genuine spirituality when you see it." Angela admires genuine spirituality.

Cynthia [redacted] is a seventy-something Caucasian female who is an Education Abroad Advisor by profession. Cynthia, a descendent of Joseph Smith who began the Mormon Religious Movement, has been un-churched now for well over fifteen years. Growing up her family unit consisted of her parents and her two sisters. Cynthia's mother was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition, while her father was Presbyterian. As a compromised the family attended an Episcopalian Church. Her parents felt that the Episcopalian traditions and rituals were very similar to those of the Catholic and

Presbyterian denominations. As a child Cynthia attended church regularly with her family.

She recalls that her father lead the adult discipleship ministry at their church, and says “he always had the adults in after church for a discussion on the theme of the day, whatever that happened to be.” She says that her father was deeply interested in spirituality. Conversely, Cynthia’s recounts that her mother understood death to be simply a release from this life. So, instead of transitioning to something better or worse, like heaven or hell, her mother believed that death was simply a release. Cynthia does not remember her mother ever being very vocal about her spirituality.

One of her earliest spiritual memories was of attending a religious retreat with her family. During this retreat Cynthia recalls “running around in a large field, with my arms out-stretched, trying to reach God, or faith, or something!” That connection did not happen. As a teen-ager Cynthia continued going to church with her family on a regular basis noting “it was a part of what we did, and I never really questioned it.” Cynthia recalls another time in her life when she tried to access the spirituality that others seemed to have. She describes doing all of the ritualistic things like baptism and communion and kept expecting that connection, which never materialized. Cynthia says that, “there was no connections to God, or to the church.” Given this lack of connection Cynthia has never truly considered herself to be churched. During her college years she would not have attended church without promptings from her family. She acknowledges that what was taught in church was not reinforced at home, and that her understanding was that “church was something special. Something people were trying to reach. It was better than

everyday life." Subconsciously she recalls thinking "there is no real substance to what is being taught and that it all eventually coalesced into a grey mush of nothingness."

When she married Cynthia promised her new mother-in-law that she would raise her children in the Roman Catholic Church. Given that early promise Cynthia took her children to Mass each week for eighteen years. It was however just Cynthia and her two children who attended. Her husband and his mother, who lived with them, did not ago to church with them. Cynthia discloses that during that time she didn't feel comfortable closing the door on the church. She still hoped that a spiritual connection would materialize for her. Having come from generations of believers, she did not feel comfortable going against that aspect of her ancestry. She says "I didn't feel strong enough to negate everything and everyone before me and so, I continued to go to church." As a seventy year old woman the connection still has not been made and because of this lack of connection Cynthia considers herself an Agnostic. After her children went off to college Cynthia became un-churched for the second time. This is where she currently is.

When asked what she liked least about going to church, Cynthia indicates that she was more critical as an adult returning to church. She recalls having a very difficult time with the lecture style of teaching. "I just couldn't swallow the fact that, one man, one individual could stand there and speak for everybody. I saw it as negative, and began tuning it out."

Cynthia considers the number one reason she no longer attends church to be because religion does not make sense to her. She indicates she is not a believer in the sense of what the church teaches, but that she is on a spiritual journey. She has done

extensive studies on the topic of mythology, and how societies create those mythologies. She's read and studied *Mask of Terror,* by Hugh Desmond and *The Masks of God,* a three volume series by Joseph Campbell. From these studies Cynthia understands how easily one can become a fanatic where religion is concerned. She understands that "regardless of the religion one professes, if you only focus on one denomination, you can no longer maintain a 360-degree worldview. . . . People become so focused on their own religion, that the whole world is viewed through their denominational prism."

According to Joseph Campbell our brains work by tribal mentality. She goes on to explain that our fight-or-flight nature prompts us to hold tight to our communities of belonging. These communities whisper to us that we need to belong to a tribe in order to survive. She feels that this mentality was helpful at one time, when our society was less civilized, and that now we should attempt to transition away from this tribal mentality. She comments, "I'm always looking for signs of peace, negotiation, or something, maybe democracy. Whatever indicates that we're not falling back onto this tribal mentality?"

Cynthia follows the same principles when advising students who are preparing to Study Abroad. "We're always putting these students in uncomfortable situations within other cultures. I tell them that it's up to them to engage and that if they do they can become a different person." She also advises them to try to think differently. Some of them still go abroad and "never engage those around them, they return unchanged."

Cynthia would not consider returning to a traditional church environment. She says "if someone asked me to go, I would probably go, but for them." She emphatically states "if it were only for me, I would never return to a church." Given she has never made a real spiritual connection to God, Cynthia feels that she has not been effected

positively or negatively by not attending church. “You can’t lose or miss something you never had.” In addition, she did not make an intentional decision to be un-churched. She again describes having no spiritual connection attaching her to a church.

When thinking about some other church model, the conversation turns to the organizational style of Doctors without Borders. She admires the way they effectively come together outside of their profession to help others. They have developed a viable way for their profession to serve and to give back outside of their individual hospital settings. “Maybe Christians should consider this model.”

Rita [redacted] is a fifty-something Caucasian female who works as a domestic engineer. At the time of the interview Rita had been un-churched for less than one year. Rita grew up regularly attending an Episcopalian church. She describes going to church as a real family affair. Every Sunday she, her parents, siblings, and grandparents on both sides, went to church together. As the oldest of six children she had a special role in helping to prepare the Sunday meal her family shared each Sunday. Being a part of this entourage was energizing for Rita.

She and her siblings went to Sunday school, sang in the church choir, and her brothers were Acolytes. An Acolytes is a young child or teen-ager chosen who assists the priest with the mass and other events. She is proud to say that “a family was considered highly esteemed when their son was chosen to be an acolyte. … It was an honor.”

Rita’s husband was raised in a very strict Baptist environment. His family’s church was so restrictive, that they were not allowed to get married in there because she was not of the Baptist faith. Rita came into the relationship with a child, and “my mother-in-law set out to be sure that I had a clear understanding of what the Baptist faith was

about." Rita recalls it wasn't until she met her in-laws, specifically her mother-in-law, that she "got saved". She explains "it was a while that my mother-in-law was talking to me about it before I got it." At a bible study held at her in-law's home, she accepted Christ as her Savior and became a "born-again Christian." She tenderly remembers when her mother-in-law presented her with her own bible and says "having a bible of my own was very special."

As an Episcopalians she had never been taught about the personal connection to God, but says that the Baptist Church made this connection very clear. The Baptists explain the step by step path to accepting Jesus Christ as one's personal savior. Until that time Rita had just read about Christ. When asked what she was prior to accepting Christ and becoming a "born again Christian" she responds "just an Episcopalian who went to church. I knew about Christ, but didn't know about the acceptance of Christ." At this point in her spiritual journey Rita changed her denominational affiliation.

Rita dislikes the way Christians feel the need to push their beliefs on people of other faiths. She has a friend, Carol, who is a strict Catholic. Carol is not taught that she needs to be saved, and she's not open to that concept. Carol's niece is a born again Christian who pushes the issue over, and over. Rita thinks that the badgering has shut Carol down. She notices that Carol shies away from any and all conversations related to religion or spirituality. Rita says "its' just too much, but her niece really doesn't care because she feels it's her solemn obligation to convert Carol. . . . That's the job of the Holy Spirit. I'm not going to be pushy that way. I'm never going to tell anybody that they're going to hell if they don't believe what I believe . . . its' just not right."

She fervently believes that “some of the teachings of the church are designed to scare people” noting “people like to scare others . . . they like to keep them fearful because they can pull their strings easier when they’re in a fearful state of mind. It’s more difficult to make balanced decisions when a person is fearful, and some people deliberately take advantage of others when they are in this state of mind.” She further states that “in a true conversion people come to God because of love not fear. . . . Why would the Lord have us live in such fear? . . . Isn’t that why Christ died?”

Rita says that like a government, the church is used to having control. “They like telling people where to go, and what the rules are . . . this is how you live.” She goes on to note that while our young people, could believe that Jesus died for us, they don’t want to sit in a controlled atmosphere being told what to think or believe. “They want to teach and participate . . . they want group discussion.” Rita asks “where else do we go now a-days to sit and listen to one person tell everybody else how to communicate with God, and live their lives?” “They have come down on the wrong side of pretty much every major issue there is from slavery, to women’s rights and now gays, and divorce . . . it’s difficult to know what you can go to them with. The church is still saying come to us and the un-churched are saying no, that’s not how people operate these days.”

Rita notes that some people in church think if you don’t go to church you’re not a follower of Christ. What they’re really saying is “you can’t get to God without them. …you have to come here to talk to God . . . to learn about God. People believe that, even though it is not scriptural,” she says. Rita feels that the church is very staunch and mean spirited, and that Jesus was not. She points to the places Christ walked and the people He talked with during his ministry. “Who wants to be a part of shutting people out and

insulting whole populations of people . . . that's not Jesus and not the way to attract people . . . you should be inviting, happy, and open." "They should just practice what they preach, or what Jesus Christ preached . . . but they seemingly practice just the opposite." She feels that the church leadership is trying to control the service, the people, and ultimately the Spirit of God. "Why don't they just let God do that . . . I don't know how they can put themselves in that place."

Trisha [redacted] is a fifty something Caucasian female. She is a domestic engineer, and has been un-churched now for five years. Trisha has a difficult time defining herself as un-churched. She thinks it may be the newness of the term, and says that she had never heard it used prior to this study. In response to the term she defensively reports that she has attended a couple of the weekly bible studies at the campground where she resides. She has also attended their Mother's Day service this year. She concedes that going to church on Mother's Day could be considered a special event, but argues that going to bible study is not. While Trisha would like to believe that her attending bible study two times in the last year does not qualify her to be categorized as un-churched; she does agree that neither the bible study, nor the Sunday Service are something she does regularly. The participant was reminded by the researcher that if she were feeling uncomfortable in any way, that she could and should decline the interview. Trisha was assured that her withdrawal from the project would not hamper the research. Trisha indicates again that she does not feel that this interview is inappropriate. It was noted that an individual who is churched would not have been able complete the interview. Trisha was easily able to respond to all of the interview questions.

Trisha grew up as a practicing Catholic. She is the youngest of four children and says that during her pre-teen years her whole family went to church. “I can’t say exactly when we stopped. It may have been when my parents got divorced. I don’t exactly remember when that happened, or why.” Trisha explains that her parents had been married for over twenty-five years and that divorce was still frowned upon in the 1980’s. Trisha does recall completing her First Communion and thinks that she went to church until she was in her early or pre-teen year. She believes that because of the divorce the church excommunicated her mother, noting that while it was not done formally “they definitely ousted her . . . though we never actually talked about it!” Trisha describes her mother as being “extremely disheartened by the way the church treated her . . . when we needed them the most they said bye!”

As the youngest child in the family, by the time the divorce actually happened, she was the only child left at home with her mother. She describes feeling “lost to her family” and reveals that her path for the next ten to twelve years involved a lifestyle of “drinking, partying, and drugs.” At the age of about twenty-three Trisha went into a drug and alcohol treatment program and began to “get clean.” She met her future husband in an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Meeting a few years later. Shortly after that they both felt that they needed more, and went in search of a church that would meet those needs. Eventually they settled in a small local church in Windham County where they raised their four children. Trisha describes their nearly twenty year partnership with those in the Fellowship as “good times!” She says of that time “we were active, learning the Word, and growing . . . we were tithing and things were very good. It was amazing what we learned, and how we grew.” Trisha and her husband decided to homeschooled their

children. In addition she says that they were taught biblical principles, and that she and her husband tried to reinforce those principles in their home.

Trisha considers the #1 reason she no longer attends church to be her adultery, and subsequent divorce. She explains that after she committed adultery, she and George divorced, and the church withdrew from them. Everyone in her family was hurting and when the family broke up their lifestyle changed dramatically. Shortly after that their home went into foreclosure, and her children were forced to attend public schools. Trisha says that she takes full responsibility for breaking up her family. As a bible believing Christian she is drawn to the Book of Revelation where it says "adulterers and thieves will go to hell." While she does not feel that her sin is the worse sin of all "if the bible says it, I believe it." She again insists "I believe the bible" while in almost the same breath fearfully uttering "I don't want to go to hell!" She is inconsolable on this issue. Trisha says she no longer attends church because of the choices that she made. "Those choices affect the way people in the church look at me. They no longer looked me in the eye, or openly prayed with me." She feels very deeply that they have judged her, and that they no longer receive her openly. She acknowledges that her perceptions are not necessarily 100% true, but that's how she feels. They did not say this verbally but as a result of their unspoken actions and behaviors she stays away. Trisha admits that there were and are many good people who have been supportive of her and her children emotionally and financially. Noting that "many helped with the kids . . . while there were some who just took advantage of the situation." When asked if there was anything else that contributes to her not attending church Trisha responds that it is her lifestyle. She feels that she is off the path and that her lifestyle is not conducive to a church

environment. She points to the fact that she smokes, and drinks alcohol, and is currently in a relationship with her three year old son's father. Trisha feels that she would need to change too many things in order to even consider returning to church.

Trisha has always struggled to fit in, and is not sure that she has the energy to try again. When she was married and going to church she would buy dresses that were not her style because she wanted to fit in. She not so jokingly refers to these types of dresses as "Janice Connor dresses." If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, it may be that Janice was the person Trisha most admired during her time in this local church. Her goal was to look and to talk a certain way so that she could feel as though she was a part of what was going on in the church. She explains "no one in the church ever told me I needed to be like anyone else. I think I must have heard it in my heart." Trisha feel that the leadership non-verbally placed certain individuals out front as role models. She feels that every couple in the church tried to be like the Pastor and his wife. "Their kids were the best, the way they homeschooled was the best, and their commitment to attending church every Sunday and Wednesday was the best. . . . She notes that if they ever did anything wrong, we didn't know it. We all wanted a marriage, and a family like theirs."

Trisha addresses the sexual abuse that happened to her eleven year old daughter at the hands of a twenty-six year old church member. During the time the family was going through the divorce, Trisha rented one of her rooms out to a member of the church. In the spring of 2014, five years after this individual moved out of their home, it was revealed that he had sexually molested her then eleven year old daughter. While the sexual abuse happened in 2009 the information was not revealed 2014. Trisha is troubled that this happened under her nose and laments "they were supposed to be helping us." Trisha is

still digesting this and seems confused and conflicted. While she is angry with this man she wonders "who am I to judge anyone after what I've done?" Trisha has suspicions that certain people in the church knew that this abuse was going on yet did not tell her. Knowing that this was happening taints the perceived help given by the church at the time of the separation and subsequent divorce. She feels that she failed her daughter during a time when she was very vulnerable. This failure brings a sense of guilt that will not allow her to pursue this issue criminally.

Trisha made an intentional decision to become unchurched even though she says "it played out over time." She describes continuing to attend after the divorce because the kids were still very active there. "This was the only church they knew and I guess the church was trying to be there for my kids." It was a tough time because by then her husband had moved out of the home he had built for the family. Eventually because she wasn't attending regularly, and because of her lifestyle, she eventually stopped going altogether. It was during this time that she became pregnant with Michael, her three year old son. Her four older children have since left the home. Two live with their father in Tennessee. She and four year old Michael currently live in a trailer.

When asked what kinds of spiritual settings would help her to grow Trisha responds that she would like a place where she can connect, be open, and share her faith. She says that the way you help someone would be to share your history and problems so that person trusts you, and feels that they can talk to you about their issues and concerns. "If Christians don't share their real problems, and only gloss over them with magical thinking, then who is going to want to share their real concerns with them? . . . If they're covering up their crap, and it's always me sharing my garbage, how is that going to

work?" She finds this approach very lopsided, and says that this way of doing things produces a lack of depth, and makes others feel isolated. Trisha feels that too much is hidden and never discussed. "Church is about relationships, you reach people by way of relationships. I don't see myself just getting up one day and going to some church I don't know. That's just not going to happen." Trisha says she would return to a traditional church noting that "I feel a little dry."

Colleen [redacted] is a fifty-something African American female who did not grow up attending church. Growing up in New Hampshire she "has not developed much trust in her predominantly white world." Colleen says she has met some people who are genuine, and has some long-term relationships; but has experienced quite a bit of negativity associated with being an African American female. Colleen states that she has "kind of lost faith in people" and "doesn't expect people to be genuine." She seemingly reminds herself that "you have to have faith in people because when you think about it that's what it's all about."

Colleen is impresses by her mother who is now eighty-seven years old. Her mom grew up in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1930's and 1940's. She says "my mother saw a lot of the hatred and bigotry as a result of racism. That alone would have made another person bitter and angry but my mother is giving, compassionate, and understanding of human nature. When life throws me a curve ball she reminds me that God is always with me . . . she's always so good to remind me that things happen for a reason, though we might not understand what that is right now."

Given that she is un-churched Colleen feels "responsible to keep her spirituality going in the right direction. Religion seems to always tell us what we should and should

not believe, and why. I get to stand for what I actually believe, not what someone has told me I should believe." She feels these practices makes her stronger and more confident in the stances that she does take. Colleen notes that some people who go to church appear to be Christ-like but when you deal with them one-on-one, they're just nasty and mean. She doesn't want to be identified with "those types of people" and feels that "not attending church has affected her life positively." She "treats people well, and feels that not going to church has forced her to be proactive about her practices." She sees this independence as one of the positive aspects of being un-churched.

For Colleen an ideal church environment would be a place where talking about God or spirituality is not frowned upon. She feels that people are afraid to talk about God and "if we do say something we're sometimes considered trouble makers . . . there's something wrong when everyone has to think like everyone else." She thinks that people would come back if churches were more open and inclusive. Colleen enjoys listening to Pope Francis because he exhibits the kind of inclusion that the world needs.

Beverly [redacted] is a sixty-something Caucasian female. She is retired and works as a tailor. Beverly has been un-churched for less than five years. She grew up Catholic and recalls attending High Mass every Sunday with her family. This was during the time when I accepted religion "hook, line, and sinker. . . I wasn't aware of the bad stuff until much later."

Both sides of my family were "very catholic. . . . We didn't talk or necessarily practice it at home though." She describes their practices as being ritualistic, and explains "we put priests and nuns on pedestals." Beverly describes priests and nuns in and out of their home on regularly. Her aunt [mother's sister] was a nun, and the priests often visited

her grandmother. It was during her high school years that Beverly initially stopped going to church. She conveys that she was both angry and disillusioned when she began to notice the hypocrisy of the church.

Shortly after her two children were born, Beverly went back to the church. Her husband would come with them occasionally, but primarily it was her and the kids. After the divorce, she continued taking the kids because she "wanted them to grow up with something." However, she notes, "something had changed." The priest then told her that because she was getting a divorced her children could no longer participate in the alter ceremonies. "The people wouldn't like it" she recalls him saying. She remembers thinking "you can't mess with my kids noting that these are the same people who turned their eye to the pedophilia that was going on right in front of them. . . . The idea that they could try to exclude my kids was the depth of hypocrisy for me." It was at this point that Beverly became un-churched again.

She recalls that her son was in junior high school at the time, and didn't want to leave Saint Matthews, because his friends were there. She encouraged him to try the new church for one Sunday, because his sister really wanted to go, and he never looked back. When the family began attending the congregational church she noticed that her children were much happier. They were more relaxed and more balanced in their theology. The congregational church "didn't ram doctrine down their throats" and Beverly really liked that. "They were taught to understand the bible, and what it was actually about, and were encouraged to have conversations. They discussed topics like, why God would allow the Holocaust and were able to ask real questions." She feels that this environment gave them some of the tools they needed to go out and talk to people who are not like them "which

is what a parent wants, right?" Beverly feels that the congregational church is more accepting then the Catholic Church she grew up in.

She considers herself to be a borderline agnostic and explains that "she believes in something, but nothing organized." Denominational affiliation is important to her and she does understand the differences better than most of the participants in the study. She likes what she hears so far from Pope Francis and thinks "he's decent."

Beverly feels that many of the cardinals of the Catholic Church "should be in jail." She voices that Cardinal Eagan specifically should be jailed, but instead, they sent him to Rome. "I knew someone who committed suicide because of the sexual abuse he suffered as a child at the hands of the church. . . . Parents used to be able to trust their priests . . . when we were growing up we did, we never questioned that. But of course now we find out that during that time, behind the curtain, all of this child abuse was going on with our kids. These horror stories are really disturbing. I would not trust children with any church and that's a very, very sad statement."

At this point in the interview Beverly requests that the recording be turned off. With the tape off, she tells her personal story of the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her local priest. This abuse occurred after the divorce when she describes herself as both "vulnerable and exhausted." Beverly believes in the value of counseling and so she went to her local priest for counsel. The priest began a sexual relationship with her. Beverly says that "after months of this, she was finally able to garner enough strength to refuse him! . . . He raped me and refused to allow me to end the relationship." Beverly then made the decision to report him which resulted in a court battle that she eventually won. Her case is landmark and precedent setting. "I knew at the time that if I didn't do

something I would be walking around angry for a long time . . . these people represent Christ. People see them that way . . . for some it is the closest they will ever get to God."

Beverly does not value the bible. She feels it is used to keep people "in their place." She sees the writings as basic human principles that men have taken and put into a book. They say you have to "say it this way, or do it that way or else. …they want people to believe that you have to come to church to get to God . . . what about the pre-bible days? People talked to God then . . . it just makes no real sense." Beverly says that many in church leadership are chauvinists and "intentionally stand in the way of women taking their place in the church. I'm amazed that in 2014 they still expect us to believe that God sees men and women differently, as far as leadership is concerned."

The number one reason she no longer attends church would be the people. Their self-righteous attitude towards others who are not like them is almost intolerable for Beverly. Whenever she goes to church it's not long before she gets irritated with the way the people think. Beverly tells the story of a woman she met who was so proud to tell everyone that her son had been accepted into Liberty University, a Christian online degree program. Beverly asked the women "why Liberty University?" Her response was "because it's Christian." Beverly seemingly explodes asking in frustration "who the hell pays to send their kid to Liberty University? Education is supposed to provide exposure to the world . . . either you value education or you don't. If you value education, on any level, would you send your kid to Liberty University? They go and create their own higher education system so that they can stay with people like themselves . . . oh, and it's online! It's not only at cross purposes with the concept of education, but also with their very own mission. I don't want to be associated with that attitude. The idea that they

think that they're better than everyone else, does not feel right." The people seem to come with a self-righteous attitude. Beverly thinks it's just a disguise for their insecurities, which are mainly the result of their only being with people like themselves. "They say they're going to heaven and everybody else is going to hell. If that were the case, and that's a big if, as disciples of Christ shouldn't they really care?" She honestly believes "Christians would be willing to stone someone if someone told them that the bible said so!"

Beverly did not make an intentional decision to become un-churched. She explains, "my kids were grown and I just didn't want to go alone." She describes volunteering for a few things in the church, but says "nobody ever called." It seemed to her that "without her children there was no place for her there any longer." Beverly continued going to a weekly bible study for a while, but it just didn't work. She not so jokingly says that "one day I just didn't get up." At this point that Beverly became un-churched for the last time. She insists that the sexual abuse is not what prompted her to disconnect, but that not allowing her children to participate did the most damage to her psyche. "The idea that they were trying to scar my kids pushed me over the edge."

Beverly has concerns for the children involved in the 2014 immigration situation at our borders. She is very irritated that Americans would scream and yell such hateful things at these kids, regardless of how they came into our country. Their screams of "go home" and "not in my back yard" were designed to scar these kids maybe for life. "Who are these people . . . it's clear that Jesus wouldn't do that to any child?"

If Beverly was confronted with a problem she could not handle, she would feel far more comfortable going to a counselor. She indicates that she has a counselor that she

engages every ten to fifteen years and that it has been very helpful. “I pay her, and so I trust her.” Beverly feels that it is important to “just get it out . . . and having someone who is balanced and trustworthy to listen is invaluable.”

Karen [redacted] a fifty-something Caucasian female has been un-churched for less than 1 year. She is a self-employed fitness instructor in Connecticut. Karen attended church with her mother for a short time after her parents divorced. She has been married three times, two of them in a congregational church. Karen recently attended a Christian fellowship with her husband. While her husband still attends regularly, less than a year ago Karen made the decision to become un-churched. Of her husband she says “he gives of both his time and finances, and really enjoys the church.” Karen feels very strongly about not attending, and her husband is respectful of her feelings. When they were attending regularly, she indicates that she “tried to fit in and to help out, but it was just not happening.”

“Some of the stuff I heard coming from the pulpit initially made me cringe, and eventually became just plain unacceptable.” She laughingly comments “I really had no idea how to even begin to talk to the Pastor about some of the things he advocates from the pulpit. . . . he is just plain scary with some of the things he believes.” She found being intimidated by one’s pastor to be disturbing and agitating. He believes the bible with no room for discussion. “If we can all read our bibles verbatim, and if there is no discussion, why do we need to gather to hear from him . . . how you can pay a guy’s salary, and not to be able to approach him about how he’s doing his job? Those types of discussions are simply off the table in this church.” This is a big church with many types of people from all walks of life. She remarks that “it is both odd and ridiculous to ask people to do that,”

but then notes that “it seems to be working because lots of people go there.” A quick search of the church’s website indicates that nearly six hundred people attend on Sundays.

Karen indicates that she is not connected to any denomination. She articulates that “the outside stuff makes it look like there is a difference, but beneath it all there is actually very little difference.” She has problems with religion on so many levels, and feels that the differences in denominations are irrelevant. Focusing on denominational affiliation takes away from some of the larger concerns. Karen has left church after church “because she has been unable to find God there.”

When asked what she liked least about going to church Karen quickly states that it was “the message.” She has concerns with the internal culture of churches like the one her husband attends. She talks again about not liking what she heard coming from the pulpit because “the pastor is only advocating his lifestyle.” This pastor has a lot of children and grandchildren. Each of them wants to only get married and to have children. This pattern makes Karen uncomfortable and she feels that “it is odd that none of them want to go to college, or engage in any lifestyle different than their parents. . . . Given the many different things that a young adult could do, the fact that none of them have pursued anything else seems a bit cultish,” she says. Karen goes on to say they each work in the church in some capacity, but have few skills outside of those taught by their parents.

Her husband knows how she feels about his church. They have had extensive discussions about it. Karen says that “he [my husband] is able to separate what they teach, from what he practices.” For example, they rent out part of their property to a

gentlemen who is gay. Her husband and he have been friends for many years. Even though her husband knows that the church would have a problem with this, he does not. "He is able to separate the church's teaching, and their opinions about gay people from his practice." She is always "fascinated by his ability to make those types of distinctions."

Karen did made an intentional decision to no longer attend church. She says that she discussed her theological concerns with her husband and "while he didn't agree, he listened. They eventually, 'agreed to disagree.' " Karen is un-churched, but does attend occasionally to support her husband.

June [redacted] is a Caucasian female and a fifty-something elementary school teacher. She has been un-churched for well over fifteen years. June was raised going to the Catholic Church but indicates that her parents did not teach biblical principles within her home. "Neither of my parents valued spiritual things enough to discuss them at home. They talked about education, and other things that were important to them, but not religion or spirituality. . . . it was obviously not important to them and going to church as a family was only done to fit into the community . . . it was more of an expectation." June recalls overhearing a conversation between her parents. In this conversation her mother said that she "didn't believe in God, and that she didn't believe in anything." June says that her parents never knew that she heard that conversation. "I was young and thought 'oh poor mom.' " June sensed that her father was the true believer, and that "mom just went along with the façade."

June recalls after her parents divorced that her dad became un-churched. He became disconnected because of the church's stand on the issue of divorce. "He had been the one motivating us all to go, but after the divorce the church made him feel that he no

longer had a place with them. They made him feel like a failure . . . just when he needed them the most they were not there for him." This spoke volumes to June who by this time was planning her own family. She does not associate with any denomination and says "as an adult I have never joined a church. The few times I have been admitted into the hospital, I have indicated Christian as my denominational affiliation."

When asked what she liked least about going to church, June says it was the message, noting that there is lots of fear being taught. They seem to be saying "if you don't do this, and that, you will go to hell." This bothers June because "if you do it because of fear, then it's clearly not free will."

The number one reason June no longer attends church is a combination of "disliking the message," and her innate sense that "religion just doesn't make sense." She indicates that she has "never actively gone looking for a church, and at this point that's not going to happen. In ten years I may feel differently but am not planning on it." June explains that it is not that church takes up too much time, nor does she have a scheduling conflict. She says that her reason for no longer attending church is because of the message they have chosen to communicate. Because of that message "religion does not make sense to her."

June would not consider returning to a traditional church environment, and does not feel that being un-churched has affected her positively or negatively. She says "I've been un-churched now for so long that it's difficult to measure its effect positively or negatively on my everyday life." June feels strongly about many things. "I don't need anyone dictating, teaching, or convincing me of what my values should be. . . . I don't need anyone preaching their values to me."

June contends that church people are judgmental and that many of them don't really want people to come back to the church. She senses what they really want is to hear us say "we were wrong for leaving . . . and we need their help spiritually. It's in the attitude they project when they find out that you're un-churched . . . either they are dismissive, condescending, or judgmental." So while June does not see herself returning, she has a strong sense that she would not truly be welcomed back anyways.

Vera [redacted] is a forty-something Caucasian female who has been un-churched now for about two years. She manages a family business in Connecticut and though she was preparing to leave the next day for a two-week vacation in Italy, she graciously took the time to be interviewed. This interview took place at the Adams Mill Restaurant in Manchester, CT.

As a child, Vera was baptized into the Catholic faith. Her mother and father did not practice anything spiritual. She did have an aunt, however, who lived near-by, who would bring her to church on Sundays. Vera remembers making her First Communion at about the age of five or six. She says that as she prepared for her Confirmation, her parents divorced. She became un-churched at that time and would not return to church again until her college years.

Vera married into a catholic family and she and her husband went to church. She had two sons during this marriage and both babies were baptized. Thinking back on that time, says in wonder "I didn't actually understand what baptism meant until about five years ago." Vera divorced at a young age. By the time she remarried she says that she had no intention of going to church and had completely abandoned the "catholic thing." She was once again un-churched. About the time that Vera had her third son she began going

to a Universalist church because her new in-laws were active members. She loved this environment and felt that she understood what was going on. She expresses that "for the first time I get this . . . there are all different kinds of people, they run the gamut . . . this works for me." She taught Sunday school and it felt right for many reasons. While her second husband didn't attend, she and the three children went each Sunday and throughout the week. She felt that she had found her church and was active there for nearly ten years. It was during this time that she had her fourth son.

It was also during this time that they learned that her father-in-law had been sexually abusing her third son, his biological grandson. Vera describes this as a very painful time for her entire family. She remembers that her son was hurting, her husband was hurting, and she was hurting. "We went to the church to ask them what we should do. . . . How we should handle the situation." With a bit of amazement in her voice Vera recalls that their response was neither negative nor positive. "They didn't seem surprised or concerned . . . they were like 'oh wow' . . . and no one seemed to offer any guidance. They just wanted it to be left alone." She recalls how uncomfortable she was around her father-in-law. This man was on many of the church boards, and may have been their largest financial contributor. "I didn't feel comfortable seeing him there, and certainly didn't feel secure bringing my children there." That was her reality and so once again Vera became un-churched for many years.

Things for her family became very difficult because they had no real tools to use to deal with the repercussions of the abuse. "It was really hurtful to our family, and to each of the individuals in the family. Our entire family transitioned away from his mother and father. As things progressed from bad to worse, my husband lost his family, and his

family business." Vera encourage her husband to return to church with her and while he went along for a short time "he wasn't really buying it."

Her youngest son struck up a friendship with the son of the local Congregational Church Pastor. The family decided to attend that church and both she and her son loved it. Vera once again got involved in teaching and "the whole church routine." She remembers thinking, "I'm good now. . . .I live in the town; and this is my church . . . great! What am I? I'm a Congregationalist." Being there felt really good to her, and the youth group was great for her son. "We joined as a family and almost immediately my husband stopped attending, though me and my son continued going." When she and her husband began divorce proceedings in 2011, things became complicated. Vera recalls going to her minister and saying "I need help . . . we need help." They attended counseling, but ultimately they divorced. She notes that while it took over twenty years for this marriage to end, that the divorce began when the sexual abuse happened.

Vera began hearing confidential things about their situation, from people in the town. These were things that only the minister would have known. It was very concerning to Vera that the minister would share her personal and confidential information with other people. "Her job was to provide spiritual counsel, and to stay neutral. Unfortunately, I can't recover my relationship with her as a friend, or as a trusted spiritual leader." As a consequence of this whole fiasco she once again has become un-churched. This is where she is now. She notes "I became un-churched for very specific and serious reasons."

Vera participates in many community activities and notes "we put all the trappings on it . . . the rituals, the building, and the steeple, but its people serving their

communities, and God." Vera believes that an independent study of the un-churched would reveal that many of these individuals are already volunteering in their communities and that they're "trying to find that reconnection to the community that they lost when they became un-churched . . . it's the same work." Volunteer work is a very important connection and "one of the reasons people feel so good about going to church. They feel they are contributing. People don't always know where to serve and the church provides those opportunities."

When asked for the #1 reason that she no longer attends church Vera responded immediately with "lack of trust." She explains that she is not opposed to going, but because of her experiences does not trust the leadership. She has experienced the same concern in different church environments and notes that she is not open and ready "to physically go into another space." Vera indicated that she definitely does not trust the church with children, and this adds to the general malaise she experiences when thinking of the church as a place to feel comfortable. This persists, even though she does not have little kids anymore. She contends that sexual abuse happens a lot and "people rationalize not wanting to get involved. They justify their lack of involvement by forcing themselves to think that someone else has done something, but kids are everyone's responsibility."

When asked what denomination she prefers Vera responds "I'm unidentifiable right now. I can't identify what I am. I consider myself to be an '*other,'* but really like the term '*un-churched'*. The term would work well as an official denominational affiliation." Vera would consider returning to a traditional church. She feels that being un-churched has had a negative effect on her life. "It's a loss, so its' a negative . . . it felt better when I was connected that way." Having lost her church connection has diminished her sense of

structure. For her going to church was not done out of a sense of obligation. Vera says "she really looked forward to going and enjoyed the experience of having diverse people in her life who think differently." Vera does go to church occasionally with her dad, but it is because he wants her to go, "not because she feels called to go."

"This time it's beyond rituals and guilt . . . or going because that's what a 'good girl' should do…that's just not working for me." She laughingly comments "being raised catholic I recognize the importance of guilt in the whole religious experience. Our culture makes us feel that it's the thing to do. Go to church . . . be a good girl." Vera made an intentional decision each time she became un-churched.

To purposefully enhance her spiritual life Vera states that she is both meditative and reflective. She prays or talks to God and more importantly, God talks to her. She feels it most in the morning when she has her coffee and is sitting on the front porch in a contemplative manner. "Almost all the time I am conversing with God." Vera realizes that prayer is continuous and that "you don't have to go anyplace special, or say anything more special than being where you are, doing what you happen to be doing. It is just conversation with God." Vera feel the need for additional spiritual connections. That would include more conversations with people about spiritual issues and concerns. She says "conversations like this one would be great, rather than nonsensical conversations about what shoes I bought, or what vacation I just returned from. How about some meaningful conversation . . . people are not having meaningful conversations about God because were afraid to disagree, or because we're busy trying to influence or convert somebody? People seem to be afraid to have basic spiritual conversations."

The kinds of spiritual settings Vera would like to see in place would be settings that are outdoors and connected to nature. She values being outside these days, and really appreciates nature. “Paying attention to the birds singing is a good idea. Watching a sunrise is a good plan. Those things seem to make more sense to me right now than being physically in a building.”

Vera relates that “she felt incredibly judged with her recent divorce.” One of her best friends has cut ties with her because of the divorce. This friend told Vera, “I don’t care what you think you need, you stick with your own family,” and has not talked to her since. “A real Christian wouldn’t do that because that’s not what faith is about. The judgment from this divorce is very strong.” The incident has deeply scared Vera, just as her former friend intended it to. Vera feels “people see in you what they wish they had, and they’re almost angry at you for doing what they would like to do.” They think “you should be able to just stick it out like I’m doing.”

“Maybe I didn’t handle my life perfectly, I’m human . . . I should be able to tell my story, whatever it is, without feeling judged . . . how the church has handled my life situations and concerns are less than stellar. My marriage didn’t dissolve overnight. . . . It took a long time, and they did absolutely nothing. They had no counsel when I went to them, and I went to them many times over the years. … but now they have plenty of judgement.”

Community engagement is very important to Vera. As such, her ideal church would be one in her local community. Like her aunt, she is adamant that she would not be comfortable in a church that “didn’t accept Jews, Blacks, gay people . . . oh, and let’s not

forget divorcees," she laughingly quips. Vera acknowledges "it would need to be a pretty open church to deal with my issues . . . that's a lot of baggage."

Sharing that her former father-in-law recently killed himself, Vera noted that the Universal church that she had left "way back when" made a big deal of his passing. "They did the whole eulogy thing, lit candles and everything." She notes that both of his sons went up and spoke. People were not told that he had killed himself, they though he'd just died. Vera says that for "appearance sake" they wanted everyone to attend. Her oldest son Jack refused and said "I'm not taking part in this façade." The son this abuse happened to also refused to go. "These are the kinds of things that happen in life and you have to make a choice." Sadly, there are lawsuits because apparently he has harmed other young boys. Vera talked about being very discouraged over the past year. Finding herself un-churched again is frustrating. "I don't want to go through another unchurching . . . I don't have the emotional energy, yet here I am. It's like you don't want to have another boyfriend after a break up because you don't want to have another failure."

Victoria [redacted] is the sixty-something African American single mother of one son. She began her journey into the world of the un-churched in 2011 when she left her local church. As a child her exposure to the church came as a result of attending a catholic elementary school for eight years. Attending church on Sundays and participating in religious instruction were requirements of attending parochial school. Her family was one of only two African American families attending the school. Victoria remembers feeling isolated from her neighborhood friends who all attended the local public school. When she graduated from eight grade and began attending the local public high school she became un-churched.

On the rare occasion that her family did attend church together, it was usually a Baptist church service. For example, her grandmother's funeral service was held at an African-American Baptist Church in Chicago. Eventually, the teen realized that black churches practiced different traditions and rituals than white churches. They dressed differently, praised differently, and the sermons and messages were nothing like those coming from the pulpits of the catholic churches she had been exposed to. The Black churches "had wild hats, dancing, and even fell out on the floor." This practice was referred to as being *slain in the spirit*. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* says that this practice is *"a* relatively modern expression denoting a religious phenomenon in which an individual falls down, the cause being attributed to the Holy Spirit. Practiced primarily within modern Pentecostal and charismatic faiths the practice has other names like "falling under the power," "overcome by the Spirit," and "resting in the Spirit."[1]

To her surprise the ministers, unlike the priests and nuns in the Catholic school and church, were married and actually had children. Different still were their preaching styles. The formal, sometimes stilting liturgy of the priests were clearly overshadowed by the flamboyant preaching style of the African American ministers in the Baptist churches Victoria was exposed to. While this was a fascinating venture for the young teenager, Victoria noticed that her mother didn't take these practices any more seriously than those set forth by the Catholic Church.

It wasn't until she was nearly thirty-five years old that Victoria understood the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Her ten years old son also accepted Christ at

[1] Burgess and van der Maas, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 453.

this time and both began attending a Baptist church in their local community. Victoria realized that within the major denominations there are white and black churches. Her limited exposure to theology, religion, and spirituality caused her to wonder "how Christians could be talking to, and about the same God. . . . How could God create such discord and division. . . . How could the Kingdom of God be segregated?"

As she grew in faith she realized that all of the rituals and traditions she had been exposed to in her youth had meaning. The stained glass windows, the Stations of the Cross, and even the Apostles Creed seemed to take on new meaning. They had all "designed to point her to Christ, but until now their significance had been lost." After several years of exploring different church environments she and her seventeen year old son settled into a small local church in their neighborhood. She held a leadership position here and her son sang on the worship team while completing his undergraduate work. "He fit in very well with the young adults of the fellowship, and that was important to me" she says.

When asked what she liked most about going to church Victoria reminisces "I liked the whole package, because all of it worked together to provide a meaningful experience." She especially enjoyed the practical growth she experienced through active service. She was afforded the opportunity to serve in a number of different ministries. Vicki was active coordinating the church bookstore where they sold books and duplicated sermons. She also served as a team leaders in the children's church ministry, and was afforded the opportunity to developing curriculum for the church's new Adult Bible Training Center as its new academic Dean. Victoria was able to use her Master's degree in Organizational Management to serve in the administrative activities of the church. The

Dean was afforded the opportunity to teach the Old Testament and other courses to the students of the Center. These were positive and constructive times during which Victoria indicates "she grew professional and personally." Her acceptance by the people within the church "added to her sense of belonging and she felt that she was growing in her relationship with God."

Over a period of four to five years the enrollment numbers for the Bible Training Center began to seriously dwindle. The Dean developed marketing campaigns including a web site, posters, and other literature to engage the community. None of these efforts increased enrollment. She eventually came to understand that the Training Center, originally developed as a regional center, would only reach those individuals who happened through the doors of her local church. Her marketing efforts were on display throughout the church space. One could conceivably find a particular flyer in five or six locations in the building, on the website, and as a part of the weekly Power point Presentation and Sunday morning announcements. The website, while available to anyone with access to the internet, was not advertised outside of our local church walls. These obscure distinctions became clearer as time moved on. Victoria says "either the leadership knew that the Training Center would not be advertised outside of the church, and intentionally failed to communicate that information to me, or they tacitly understood it and expected that I understood as well. The marketing efforts continued with no results. When the church recruited students for the Bible Training Center it would only be from those inside of the church walls. This was true of all of our ministries. While all of the physical signs had been there for many years, she finally understood this reality. "I felt as though I had failed despite all of my efforts, but I didn't know why or how to correct that

failure." She describes this time as "heartbreaking, life changing, and the beginning of her becoming un-churched." As Victoria began to understand that she was part of a small exclusive club she recalls "my sense of isolation became acute." We were critical of all people, denominations, and world views different than our own which placed her at cross purposes with her mission to engage her community. She says "it caused me to be isolated from the very community and world I had been mandated to talk to as a disciple of Jesus Christ. I felt un-Christ-like in my practice, and my practice is all I really have."

Jazzercise is one of Victoria's methods of exercise, she has been Jazzercising for well over fifteen years. Vicki can distinctly recall in 2009 when her local Jazzercise class lost access to their meeting venue. Victoria got permission from her Pastor for the group to meet two times a week in one of the many back rooms of the church. She says, "even though the room was not being used it was clear that we could not expect to meet there on any regularly or continuous basis. The church members we occasionally saw as we came and went were clearly uneasy and uncomfortable engaging us. It was an opportunity to engage their community." It was another of the odd situation that Victoria "brushed under the rug."

Another instance of this isolating culture could be witnessed each year as the women of the church prepared to attend our Annual Women's Convention. The Convention was a big deal for us because it is designed to be a fun, spirit-filled week-end get away. As a professional development opportunity the teachings were intended to assist in our spiritual and emotional renewal. Suffice it to say Victoria needed very little encouragement to attend each year. The acts of securing a roommate, and a driving buddy were also very important aspects of this preparation and of fitting into the internal culture

of the church. She laughingly notes "like children being picked to participate on a kickball team, nobody wanted to be the last roommate chosen. There was clearly an in-crowd and a not so in-crowd, and we all tacitly understood our standing."

James Hopewell makes the observation that, "a group of people cannot regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes without developing a complex network of signals, and symbols and conventions—in short, a subculture—that gains its own logic and then functions in a way peculiar to that group."[2] Ammerman et al., goes on to describe an organization's culture as what is created when the experiences, behaviors and practices of individual are woven together.[3] A congregation's internal culture can be different depending on the congregation and the characteristics of its members. Ammerman et al., counsels that "understanding a congregation requires understanding that it is a unique gathering of people with a cultural identity all its own."[4]

Preparing for and attending this annual event demonstrates the fabric or internal culture of this particular congregation. When the twenty-five to thirty women from our local church finally got to the Convention, we sat together, ate together, and as planned roomed together. Victoria says in retrospect "I'm not sure what my expectations were, but as fifteen years came and went, being in with the in-crowd no longer felt like the Godly place to be." This internal culture no longer feel healthy to Victoria, or to her son who was headed to graduate school in D.C. "I realized I didn't want to continue hearing messages that didn't get me up and talking to people . . . I didn't want to feel

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[2] James Hopewell, Congregation: Stories and Structures (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987), 5.

[3] Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations*, 78.

[4] Ibid.

uncomfortable because I was in exercise clothes . . . and I was not having any real spiritual conversations with people outside or inside of my church. The people I knew outside of the church avoided me, and those inside didn't seem to be able to have a real spiritual conversation without a point by point apologetic training session from the Pastor. The lack of genuine spiritual conversation was suffocating. I eventually concluded that this was not the kingdom mentality advocated by Jesus Christ."

Her time on the leadership team helped her to understand that while they were interested in influencing their community, they had no real understanding of how to do that. The congregation seemed to valued their internal culture more than their mission or their own spiritually development. Another component of the internal culture of this congregation is their intense need to be non-confrontational. This allowed individuals to be in areas of church service that they were not gifted for. Their need to remain non-confrontational far surpassed their need to be honest with one another. For example, there were individuals on the small worship team who clearly could not sing well. In order to mask that person's voice, the voices of the gifted singers were blended into what Victoria terms white noise. Victoria feels that this practice "created mediocrity within the worship ministry" and notes that "this lack of honest feedback occurred over and over and could be seen in most ministries. . . . When I realized that other partners were not treated with honesty, I naturally began to wonder what my covenanted partners were not being honest with me about." Vicki says that the guilt associated with these initial thought kept her in fellowship with this congregation for three additional years. It became clear as time went on that the congregation was more interested in staying in their non-confrontational comfort zone.

As if suddenly none of their practice made any logical sense to Victoria . . . not the worship, or the messages, or the recycled discipleship programs. She thought that these programs were designed to strengthen the believer so the believer could go out and interact with people not like themselves. Even though she was seemingly on the inside, strangely well liked, and awkwardly comfortable in her leadership position, Victoria says she felt like "a prisoner of her local church. The gospel which is designed to free, felt like handcuffs . . . my worship, service and other connections to God began to flat-line, and I realize that if there is no going, then there is no real need to be replenished or disciple."

The number one reason Victoria no longer attends church is that it does not allow her to express her faith in a practical manner. What the church seems to be teaching is separation by way of fear, a fear of the very world they were sent to engage. She notes that instead of listening for commonalities, we were taught to notice the differences in theological doctrine. Not only were we weary of those of other faiths, but we were also detached from Christians in other churches who did not believe what we believed. In hindsight it is easy to understand why the Bible Training Center did not recruit students from the local Assemblies of God congregation one mile down the road, or the other regional churches in the area. It seems that this is "an unspoken and frowned upon no-no" because there are theological and doctrinal differences in even what local congregations are sharing. Some congregations "do not for example believe what we do about the Trinity … or some other denominational doctrine." One can easily see how divisive denominational affiliation can be in this 21st century. She says "at a time when Christians should be pulling together, they're even fighting one another. They would rather have six people in eighteen locations, than one hundred and fourteen in one location."

When asked if there was anything else that contributes to her not attending church Victoria responds “the people seem defensive, and in some way disingenuous . . . like they’re playing at being happy, competent, victorious, and successful, with all they imagine that entails. It’s when it manifests as some limp, bleached-out version of what we’ve been taught Jesus was like, that it becomes forced and unsustainable. Christ is original, unpretentious, authentic, and unadulterated. His encounters were real, and he related to individuals differently.” She gives the example of Jesus’ approach to the Samaritan woman at the well in the gospel of John chapter 4, which was starkly different from the challenging approach he took with the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16: 1-3. To this Samaritan woman He speaks of living waters, and proceeds to tell her that the walls erected to keep people away from God were dissolving. He talks to the synagogue leadership however, about their lack of discernment. “Jesus did not shy away from conflict and controversy. He is notorious for being allied with God and with kingdom principles.” He is even heard to say that whoever is not against us is for us (Luke 9:50 and Mark 9:40). This speaks of a Christ who was proactively seeking ways to connect with people. She notes that “Jesus was genuinely Christ, and Christ was genuinely Jesus.” “We were taught to be confident in what the bible says, but not to declare that confidence in any practical way. Told that we are more than conquers, but taught not to challenge church authority or complain.” Her question becomes “if we can’t rise to the challenge of defending something we love and support like the church, how will we stand for anything else?”

Victoria made an intentional decision to not attend church any longer. She says that “after noticing a consistent pattern of disconnections from the work and the people, I

made the decision to no longer attend." She shares her memories of gradually de-escalated her service activities, and of closing out projects she was charged with. As she left the church, she attempted to do so quietly so as not to influence others. Returning the church house keys to the Pastor felt very final.

Victoria admires the spiritual life of Nelson Mandela because of the positive synergy his theory and practice produced. His practice seems to agree with the practice of Jesus Christ. To her knowledge Mandela did not talk about religion, denominational affiliation, or other differences in people. "He believed in forgiveness, advocated for it, and incorporated that into his everyday practices." Although Mandela may have failed at some points in his journey, his success far outweighs his failures. "So, while he made forgiveness look easy, those of us who have dealt with the issue know that it's not an easy principle to put into one's practice." Mandela's unique blend of belief and practice allowing him to bridge divides, and to build communities of hope. He was seen as a leader for all people and not just those who thought or lived like him. Even South Africans understood his influence to be greater than his native country. Mandela influenced his generation in positive ways and encouraged people to think differently. Victoria tremendously admires his practice.

Voices in Context

The research methodology incorporates the voices of five Context Associates who have taken this spiritual journey with the researcher. An online survey was created on the SoGoSurvey.com website. This survey was designed to ask the same series of questions

posed to those in the face-to-face interviewees. The five un-churched Associates, who represent a diversity of professional disciplines, completed the survey online in June of 2014. As discussed in the Methodology section these survey responses lend validity to the study by way of theory triangulation. Theory triangulation engages multiple perspectives and opinions that add weight to what is being qualitatively researched. The diversity of professional perspectives represented by this group of individuals adds weight to the ethnographic picture being developed in this research.

Justina [redacted] is a thirty-something African American female who works in the prison system as a Corrections Officer. Justina says "while she did attended church as a child, these days she goes exactly once every six months." She has been un-churched now for over fifteen years. Justina prays on a daily basis and encourages her twelve year old daughter to do the same. She has concerns about the church and their inability to reach the youth of today. She would appreciate a spiritual environment that could "capture the minds of the youth while engaging the adults. I would return to a traditional church that could do that."

Lyndsay [redacted] is a thirty-something Caucasian American female who works as a Payroll Supervisor at the local University. Lyndsay is also a yoga instructor and volunteers on her town's Planning and Zoning Commission. She has been un-churched for well over fifteen years. Lyndsay grew up as a Catholic and prefers that denominational affiliation. The number one reason she no longer attends church is the "hypocrisy, intolerance and judgment they display that is in direct conflict with an all loving and all forgiving God." She indicates "I have never found a church that represents my faith. …and I eventually just stopped looking." As a child Lyndsay recalls having a

heated debate with her CCD [Confraternity of Christian Doctrine] teacher as to whether a prostitute could be a Christian. “She [the teacher] said no, and I said yes. I pointing out that to be a Christian you just had to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. . . . I believed a prostitute could hold that belief and still be a prostitute . . . she disagreed and threw me out of the class.” Lyndsay remembers that she had to go and talk with the priest who pointed out that “a good Christian goes to Church” to which she replied “its’ better to be a good person than a good Christian.” Lyndsay says her separation from the Church happened at that early age in her mind and in her heart. She explains “I didn't even want to make my Confirmation but my mother made me. I knew then that I would not continue with the church, and that it made no sense to go through the Confirmation process.”

The church’s intolerance and hatred of homosexuals is something Lyndsay is unable to understand or tolerate. Their views on contraception and divorce are also major roadblocks of conflict for her. She appreciates having the ability to explore her own beliefs without being led or guided to God by people she feels may have ulterior motives. “God lives within my own heart and soul. He can be experienced in everyday living because God is everywhere.”

Amber [redacted] is a fifty-something Caucasian American female who teaches music at the local middle school. Amber has been un-churched for nearly seven years. As a child she recalls going to the Presbyterian Church with her aunt, grandmother, and three sisters. Amber’s mother and father did not attend church. Her aunt and grandmother would take Amber and her sisters to church and then to lunch every Sunday. She explains “my parents had strong moral convictions about right and wrong, and being a good person, but were not particularly religious.” In her teens, she attended a Christian

Missionary Alliance Church after being born again in one of their Vacation Bible School Programs. Amber considered herself a fundamentalist at this time and says that "she read the Bible regularly, and went door-to-door spreading the Word."

Amber converted to Catholicism while in college when she became convinced of the "authenticity of the Eucharist through historical readings and prayer." She was very dedicated and even considered becoming a nun at one point. Amber eventually married and had two children who she raised in the Catholic faith. While her husband did not attend church with them, she and the children went regularly. Sometime later she and her husband divorced. Amber recalls that "because she sought a divorce instead of an annulment she could no longer participate in the sacraments" and explains that this produced "a crisis in faith for me because I couldn't spiritually participate." Being unable to participate took away a critically important aspect of her life, and seriously impacted her faith. She notes "my faith has always been a primary and an essential aspect of my true self."

She continued attending church until her daughter refused to go through the Confirmation process, and her son converted to Jehovah's Witness. Amber explains "she lacked the energy to attend alone and began watching Sunday Mass on television." She continues to participate in Mass this way but says that it "is not a consistent practice any longer." Amber admits to being extremely disillusioned with the church and some of their teachings. She dislikes their views on homosexuality, and their attitudes around the roles of women in the Church. "I still very much believe in God, the need for prayer, and have the desire to live a life pleasing to Him," she explains. "I just don't feel that I fit in, given my divorce. I didn't fit the mold . . . and although I didn't feel any negativity from

anyone, I myself could not rightly participate in Communion knowing the rules of the Church. Her experience with the church has caused her to be more open to the plight of others that don't fit within the strict structures of the Church. She says "I am far less conservative and more open to including a variety of religious ideas and practices into my life, as a consequence of my own unexpected personal journey. I am more open to all people and ideas, and have expanded the definition of faith and what I feel is most important for me." She continues to be motivated to live a life pleasing to God and is grateful for the journey God has her on. "I had to find new ways to express faith in my life. I wandered for a long time, but feel that I am ultimately in a better place now."

Amber says that she did not make an intentional decision to be un-churched. "It evolved as my children moved away from the Church, and I no longer felt qualified, or able to offer my gifts." Her ideal church environment would be one that displays a loving and accepting environment, and takes advantage of small group connections. She would appreciate outreach that truly meets the needs of others, rather than being only focused on conversion. Amber notes that "life is a journey that takes unexpected turns. When you realize that you don't know what you will face and how you will handle it, you become more open to the plight of others. I think organized religion would benefit from being more open to the gray areas. Everything is not black and white and people are suffering in the middle."

Andrea [redacted] is a fifty-something Caucasian American who works as a Dietitian in the local area hospital. She was born into a family that practiced Catholicism, and then married a practicing Catholic. She has been un-churched now for nearly five years and say "my husband continues to attend weekly and would like to see me return to

Mass regularly." Andrea indicates that the number one reason she no longer attends church is that it is uninteresting, and does not engage her personally. That is why she made the intentional decision to become un-churched. She explains "after my daughter refused to attend my resolve to commit to regularly attend Mass quickly dissolved. What cinched the decision was that my Sunday morning Jazzercise class became more important than church. The women there were a fellowship of like-minded women." Andrea preferred to be at Jazzercise on Sunday morning because "Sunday Mass was less than motivating for me." An ideal church environment of Andrea would take place in peoples' homes, gardens, back porches, or even in a park.

Sandra [redacted] has been un-churched now for well over twenty years. She is a seventy-something African American female who retired from government service as a Director of Affirmative Action. She attended church as a child but stopped during her college years. Sandra did not take her children to church because she and their father disagreed on which church would be best. She muses "it wasn't much of a disagreement because I was not really drawn to church in any real or practical way." In later years, Sandra attended church periodically with her mother because "she needed me to drive her." She considers the number one reason she no longer attends church to be "the dissension and personality conflicts within the church." She has serious concerns with the "gap between what is preached and their behavior and specifically dislikes that the leadership of the church refuses to try to understand or learn about other religions noting that they perpetuate theological misconceptions and historical mistakes for their own ulterior motives." Sandra considers an ideal church environment to be one with no hierarchy or bureaucracy. One that is non-denominational and accepting of everyone

regardless of lifestyle. When asked if she made an intentional decision to become un-churched she responds affirmatively and says “once I left home it was easy not to attend, it was my decision.”

Patterns and Themes

The inter interviews were transcribed and the narratives given back to the participants for their content verification. This feedback process was done in order to strengthen the credibility and reliability of the interviews. The heuristic nature of coding allowed the data to inform the research. The researchers own reasoning and intuition was used to determine which data looked and felt alike. As mentioned in the Methodology section, the coding was done in a cyclical fashion. Each interview was assigned codes as appropriate.

The first cycle of coding resulted in a Codebook consisting of over 190 different codes that were drawn from the interview responses (Appendix E). The data was taken through a second cycle of coding which collapsed the Codebook even further. Efforts from the second cycle of coding can be seen in table 8.These twenty codes families were drawn from the Codebook. The data was taken through a third and final coding cycle and collapsed into the themes outlined in Table 9 and discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter..

Table 8. Second Cycle Codes

Attendance Codes (45 codes)	Internal Culture Codes (30 codes)	Denominational Codes (23 codes)	Doctrinal Codes (18 Codes)	Emotion Codes (42 codes)
Ministry of Christ Codes (18 codes)	Influence Codes (20 codes)	Life Events Codes (34 codes)	Organizational Codes (15 codes)	Postmodern Thought Codes (4 codes)
Practice and Application Codes (12 codes)	Settings Codes (6 codes)	Community Codes (19 codes)	Tacit Knowledge Codes (16 codes)	In Vivo Codes (8 codes)
Narrative Codes (9 stories told)	Descriptive Codes (19 codes)	Values Codes (9 codes)	Versus Codes (4 codes)	Attribute Codes (5 codes)

Table 9. Third Cycle Codes

Life Events Themes	Practice and Application Themes	Church Culture/ Organizational Themes	Influence Themes
Tacit and Emotion Themes	Postmodern and Spiritual Settings Themes	Commitment Themes	

Life Events Themes contain narratives related to children being born, marriage vows being taken, and other events in the lives of the participant. The theme also includes events related to adultery, sexual abuse, and divorce. Divorce and the effects of separation is a recurring theme throughout the data. Eighty-eight percent of participates expressed having been affected negatively by the church's reaction to divorce. Divorce is also a common denominator that crosses all experiences. Many participants experienced divorce from the perspective of a child, while some have had their own adult experience with divorce. Regardless of when the divorce happened, it proved to be very disruptive.

As their families were shattering, the church's reaction, or lack of reaction, compounded these already devastating situations.

These divorces prompted feelings of dismissal, guilt and disappointment. The church lacked any proactive engagement, and in many cases detached from the family, which caused additional isolation and damage. Some participants felt that this was done deliberately, while others feel "the church simply has no tools in their 'gospel box' to help a families with such situations." The church's reaction is manifested in tacit ways which include a lack of eye contact, fewer calls coming from individuals in the church; and a perceived lack of inclusion in prayer and in the taking of Communion and other rituals.

Children are directly affected by the reaction of the church to the divorce of their parents. If the divorce happened during the childhood of the interviewee, not only did they experience the break-up of their family, but the child also had their church support system dissolve. After the divorce mothers, who for the most part were responsible for getting the children to church, were no longer welcomed in the church. This has direct repercussions on the child. The child is disconnected from their youth group, and from the spiritual leaders they have come to know and rely upon. Not allowing divorced women to participate has direct repercussions for the children of those women. While these children may not know the specifics of what is making a parent unhappy, they are generally observant enough to be able to deduce the direction that trouble is coming from. They are listening to what we say, and more importantly, to what we don't say. These same discarded youths came back to the church as adults with children of their own. They brought with them the childhood experience of a church that treated their

family poorly at a time when they needed them most. If the divorce happened during the adult years of the participant, the loss is internalized differently. The need to protect a child from rejection was experienced by several of the women interviewed. In both situations impressionable children are being discarded because their parent no longer attends a particular church.

When Trisha's parents finally divorced, she was the only one of her siblings left at home with their mother. In Trisha pre-teen perspective the church "kind of sort of excommunicated us." She describes her mother as being "extremely disheartened." The devastation her mother felt when the church no longer welcomed her was obvious to Trisha. Imagine, if you will, an eleven year old girl separated from her father, her sibling, and her church youth group. Imagine also that she is privy to the rejection and resulting desolation that her mother is privately experiencing at home. One can certainly understand her statement "when we needed the church the most they said bye!" Trisha began to abuse drugs and alcohol as a pre-teen. This continued until she was in her early twenties.

Similarly, June recalls her dad being forced to become un-churched after her parents divorced. He was the one who kept them all going to church over the years. She considers that he was "the true believer in the family." She describes watching him become disconnected from his spirituality and his faith because of the church's position on divorce. "The church made him feel that he no longer had a place with them. They made him feel as if he had somehow failed." She echoes Trisha's sentiment "when he needed them the most, they were not there." This spoke volumes to young June.

Beverly reveals how disturbed she was by the fact that after her divorce her children were not allowed to participate in the alter services. She was so concerned with the repercussions divorce would have on her children, that she made the decision to obtain an annulment instead. Amber says that as an adult the stigma of her divorce hurled her into "a crisis of faith." Being unable to participate in spiritual practices like communion interrupted her practice, which in turn disrupted her spiritual connections to God. Vera says that being un-churched has forced her to develop different practices. She would love to return to a traditional church environment, and considers herself to be an ideal candidate. She has come to believe however, that her two divorces make her an unlikely recruit.

Also clustered within the Life Events Themes are the unusually high occurrences of sexual abuse experienced within this small interview group. Sexual abuse became a monster in the life of Vera when her father-in-law sexually abused her young son. The church responded with complete apathy. She says "they were not defensive, surprised, or even concern for that matter. . . .It was a very off the-cuff, blasé response." Her family was never given any guidance or support from the church concerning how this issue. Vera held her marriage together for nearly twenty years following this abuse, and continued to seek counsel from the different churches and ministers she encountered. None of them offered any real help her family. This abuse was like an ever present monster that resided under their dinner table. It inhabited their bedroom closets at night and finally took its toll in 2012 when her second marriage dissolved. Vera notices ironically that the church has plenty to say now.

Beverly's sexual abused has left her bruised, wary, and distrusting of the church. Given her abuse, she would much prefer going to a professional counselor or psychiatrist with her problems instead of someone in the clergy. Trisha, on the other hand, is still living with the recently revealed knowledge that her twelve year old daughter was sexually abused in her own home. While this abuse happened five years ago, she was only made aware of it in 2014. It is understandable that Trisha is still processing her feelings around this situation. Presently, she feels a sense of self-condemnation because of her role in breaking up her family. The condemnation causes her to be conflicted and to wonder "who am I to judge?" She insists on not using the term rape and would like to believe that her twelve year old daughter had consensual sex with her thirty something border. Given that it was during the time of her affair, and because she rented this room out to this individual, Trisha feels that she is seen as being complicit in what has happened to her daughter. Given this, she is not interested in talking to the police or pursuing legal action. While she has not spoken directly with anyone in authority, she gathers information indirectly. One of her concerns is that certain leaders in the church she was attending knew what was going on, and chose not to inform her.

The *Practice and Application Themes* relate to how the un-churched view their spiritual practices and the practices of the church. Data related to denominational affiliations are included within this theme. Even though these individual are un-churched, nearly 54% consider themselves to be associated with a specific denomination. Even those who voice no desire to return to a traditional church consider themselves to be associated with a specific denomination. Thirty-five percent say that denominational affiliation is important to them, while only 12% think that it is important to God.

While Lyndsay, Sandra and Angela have each been un-churched for well over fifteen years, they each consider themselves to be associated with a specific denomination. This denominational connection suggests that these individuals may use the practices taught to them by these denominations to make spiritual connections in their current lives. Also, many of these women have migrated from their original childhood denomination to another. They either intentionally changed their denominational affiliation, or when they married they felt the need to migrate to their husband's denominational affiliation. Initially Rita was not allowed to get marry in her husband's church because she was not a Baptist. Shortly after they married she converted and became a "born again Christian."

Cynthia was raised as an Episcopalian but considers herself to be Agnostic. The intervening years were spent taking her children to a Catholic church in an effort to fulfill the promise she made to her new mother-in-law. June, Karen and Trisha do not consider themselves to be associated with any specific denomination. Some classify their denominational affiliation as *none* or use the generic term *Christian.* Vera makes the point that she really likes the term *un-churched* and intends to refer to herself this way in the future. She suggests that the term is a great denominational marker and should take its place on the list of official denominational affiliations.

Issues around *Church Culture and Organizational Themes* are also present in the coded data. This theme includes a range of issues like how the church is organized, its teaching practices, and concerns around leadership and accountability. Included also are issues related to women, Jews, African Americans, and homosexuals who are perceived to be treated like second class citizens by the church. Vera discusses her concerns with a

church that discriminate against those groups. June, Lyndsay, Andrea, Amber, Vera, Rita, Beverly, and Karen, each expressed their disappointment with how the church views women in the 21st century. June remembers being turned off as a teen ager when the church she was attending failed to honor mothers on Mother's Day. She says from that incident "I got the message that there was no future for me there." Beverly comments "that many in church leadership are chauvinists . . . they stand in the way of women taking their place in the church." She is amazed that in 2014 "they still want us to believe that God sees men and women differently."

Also included within this theme are cultural issues noticed by the participants. Included here are those characteristics of church culture that prompt church members to conform, or to exhibit what Cynthia and Victoria consider *tribal mentality*. These cultural themes address the values and behaviors that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of the church. Within this theme are codes related to the church's perceived inability to maintain healthy relationships with those outside of their faith. Also included are experiences relating to perceived offensive behavior, and the lack of respect for others. The aspects of the church experience participants liked *most* or *least* are included within this theme.

The Influence Themes contain codes that relate to people and events that have had a positive or negative influence on the spiritual journey of interviewees. The nature of influence is that it can come from a variety of people and experiences. These participants were influenced by their own parents, Sunday school teachers, their peer, and even their new in-laws. The Influence Theme is inclusive of the influence that special people like

Pope Francis, Joseph Campbell, and Joseph Smith have had in the lives of these individuals.

Having children shaped many of the decisions made by these women. Seven out of the fifteen women returned to church when they became parents. This happened because someone in their husband's family felt that church was important. This influence also came about because these new parents wanted to expose their children to church and god. Attending church appears to be one of the parenting tools families are taught to provide to their children. Rita indicates "I wanted to give my kids at least what I was given." Having a child also motivated many to continue to attend church until their children refused to attend, or their children left home. Andrea, Beverly, Amber, June, and Victoria all indicate that once their children left home they no longer felt they had a place in their church. Justina who is one of the youngest in the study has a twelve year old child. She says that she would return if the church were able to "positively engage her daughter."

Parents and in-laws prove to be highly influential to these participants. Colleen is influenced greatly by her mother who although she was raised in the segregated south in the 1930's and 1940's is "loving, forgiving and gracious." Vera admires her father because of his "faithfulness in church attendance." Angela says that her mom "walked the walk, and talked the talk," and Victoria paid close attention to the things that impressed her mother. Trisha and June were each negatively influenced by how their parents were treated by the church when they divorced. It is noted that the experiences these children had, by way of their parents, may influence their perceptions of the church as they

matured and engaged the church for themselves. It is unclear how these experiences have influenced their adult relationships with the church and with God.

Tacit and Emotion Themes are woven throughout these interactions and experiences. A large part of the internal culture of an organization consists of processes and practices that are unspoken. These tacit communications allows us to process complex information without discussion. We each know things that we can't or don't talk about directly. Tacit communication is unspoken, but not unnoticed or invisible. So, while we may be saying one thing, our behavior and body language is communicating something else. These unspoken communications were assessed by the participants of this study and inferences were made about what was really being communicated. The un-churched are quite skilled at intercepting and interpreting the tacit behavior of the church.

Fortunately for this study behavior lends itself to observation. This makes the role of participant observer beneficial. The role has permitted the researcher to be organically immersed in the lives of the un-churched. This natural immersion has added to the synergistic development of this thesis. This ethnographic research uses the tacit codes described by the participant, to make inferences about the people and the incidents being discussed. These non-verbal communications, do not go unnoticed in any organization including the church.

One of the tacit attitudes communicated to the un-churched by those inside of the church is that they lack faith. This is communicated loudly and clearly and the un-churched receive the message that they are seen as hooligans, and un-spirituality. The un-churched have a very strong sense that they are being judged simply because they chose to practice their spirituality outside of the church. One can almost hear the "tsk, tsk, tsk"

of the Elder Son from the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32). This parable makes a very strong statement about tacit communications. The parable is told by Jesus, and follows two others parables that address the extent to which God will go in order to reach us. . When the Prodigal son returns the father prepares a party for him because in the parable, this is seen as a good thing. They are in the process of celebrating when scripture tells us:

> Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found (Luke 15:25-32).

One easily comes away with the impression that the Older Brother did not miss his brother at all, and in fact was pleased that he had finally taken off. He seems to even question that they are related with the statement "when this son of yours came back." That the Older Brother is using the absence of his little brother to accumulate brownie points with their heartbroken father is also tacitly understood. We see that the attitude of his heart, which is demonstrated through his behavior, is disapproving and mean spirited. His refusal to celebrate does not go unnoticed and is symptomatic of the insecurities which have prompted him to attempt to earn favor, a favor being given freely to those wise enough to receive it. It never occurred to him that the younger brother's search

could be of some value to the family. At the end of the day we sense that the Older Brother has learned nothing. Even though this is not the lesson on faithfulness, he seems to be stuck in his own spiritual paradigm. At the end of the parable the Older Brother is still found murmuring and complaining about how faithful he's been.

This category also includes the series of emotions that were expressed and noted throughout the interviews. Thirty-four negative emotions were voiced by these individuals while recalling their experiences with the church. While the time span varies, participants expressed that they felt: confused, disturbed, ambiguous, bored, guilty, no sense of belonging, hypocrisy, scared, frustrated, judged, discouraged, complacent, a lack of honesty, like a failure, a lack of excellence, disillusioned and isolated. These emotions contributed to their disconnection from the church.

Postmodern Themes are inclusive of code responses related to the types of spiritual settings participants preferred. Interviewees were asked three questions associated with this probe.

1) What kinds of spiritual settings would you like to see in place that would help you to grow spiritually?
2) When thinking about some other church model, what comes to mind,
3) What would you consider to be an ideal church environment?

Postmodern coding also emerged from questions concerning the participant's current spiritual practices. Nearly 90% of the respondents indicated that they would respond positively to small spiritual group settings. Many do not want to be lectured to, but would appreciate the opportunity to discuss how their spiritual lives and practices reinforce one another. Many do not believe that this type of discussion can happen in the lecture format

that most churches currently employ. Their responses point to the need for more participatory interactions like small spiritual meetings, and other small group dialogues. Spiritual settings for some translated to the need for authentic and real spiritual discussions. Settings also translated to personal practice for many. When queried as to what would be an ideal spiritual setting Karen says that she finds value in finding her own "personal space, a place where she can quiet herself down." Others would appreciate authentic discussions, small relational group interaction, and the opportunity to better understand those who believe differently.

Commitment Themes are also prominent in the research data. The questions pertaining to this theme were designed to better understand if deliberate and intentional decisions were made to no longer attend church, and the likelihood of participants returning to a church. While interviewees exhibited some intentionality when looking to find new churches to attend, many were equally intentional when choosing to become un-churched. Throughout the interviewing many participants admitted to actively pursuing a church home in the past, however, none have done so in the past year. Karen assessed the church landscape and decided it was simply not for her. She indicates that she would not return as did 46% of the respondents. Vera has joined three to four churches during her spiritual journey and notes that each time she has become un-churched "it has been for a valid reason." Angela, Trisha, Amber, Vera, and Victoria each set out to proactively look for a church home.

The 54% who indicated that they would return to church have placed steep, sometimes vague, stipulations on what would have to happen to bring them back. Colleen Masters and Justina Traynor have both indicated that they would return, however, neither

has ever attended a church for very long. Rita, who at the time of her interview had only been un-churched for one year, indicated that she would return, but says she has no actual plans to do so. She herself admits "that's very telling!" Vera would return if she felt that Jews, Blacks, homosexual and divorced people were treated with respect. Beverly says that she would return but is not sure for how long given her dislike for what she perceives as the church's self-righteous and self-centered behavior towards others. Trisha suggests that she would return but that she would have to have a relationship with a key member of the church. She would also need to muster the courage to change her lifestyle of drinking, smoking, and engaging in sex outside of marriage. The likelihood of any of these women returning to a church regularly seems improbable. The events and attitudes that have caused them to leave the church are not issues that will change overnight.

The leadership team at the church where Victoria served seemed to always be interested in ways to increase commitment. Their need to increase commitment seemed indirectly or vaguely tied to ways to improve attendance and membership. Most everything we discussed "seemed to measure a person's commitment by way of their attendance patterns." The hidden language of the internal culture was that the good partner was one who attended regularly [each Sunday and Wednesday]. Given this practice Vickie feels that commitment is measured only by way of attendance and giving. She also believes that the best service jobs in the church are given to those who attended regularly, and who gave tithes and offerings. These two variables are also the primary measurements used to gauge one's commitment to God. Given these are the organizations primary key indicator of spiritual commitment they transfer these same indicators or measurements to the spiritual commitment of the un-churched. These

variables places the churched and un-churched alike at a disadvantage, because they are not practical indicators of commitment. The un-churched are no less committed to God, no less saved, and certainly no less spiritual, than their church attending counterparts. To measure a person's commitment to God by these two variables alone is self-centered, myopic, restrictive and disingenuous. This pattern needs to shift and new paradigms developed if we want to truly understand an individual's spiritual commitment. The un-churched have much to contribute proving the hypothesis of this ministry model. The themes and patterns noted in this chapter are real. The process one goes through to become un-churched is valid, heartfelt, and authentic.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

God's Call to Individuals

The Scriptures demonstrate a clear pattern of God engaging individuals. God engaged Abraham, Moses, King David, the prophets, and John the Baptist one on one. The earthly ministry of Christ also demonstrates this pattern of one-on-one interaction. When we look at where the Savior turned in times of inquiry, despair, and discernment we see that He turned directly to God. Interestingly enough, He did not turn to the synagogue in these times. That seems almost ludicrous to suggest such a thing. Jesus' pattern was to separate Himself from even his core disciples. As Karen so aptly notes "nothing can substitute for time spent communicating with God, not even reading the bible."

The Ambassador

The researcher has been forever changed by the practical application of both wisdom and her new found ambassadorship. This practical application has acted as a

catalyst as well as a building block as she continues her un-churched journey. Upon initially leaving her church she found herself disoriented, angry, and confused. Those were difficult times because her mission and practice had been disrupted. Appreciating her role as an ambassador has provided a unique synergy, and added momentum to the research. It became clear to her that this role comes not because she speaks certain words in a prescribed order, but because she practices, honors and represents God.

Christ demonstrated His approachability and inclusion as He engaged people. He was not a bully, is kind hearted and people oriented. His attitudes and behaviors invited people to engage him, not avoid Him. People sought Jesus out which would not have happened had he practiced exclusivity. They found that in the temple. Jesus did not project a members-only attitude and was kind to those outside of the synagogue, as well as those outside of His faith. Like Lady Wisdom, Jesus demonstrates His Ambassadorship in very practical ways. God is a universal being not a national or ethnic deity, belonging to a particular group. This worldview contributes to the universal character of Wisdom, which transcends the boundaries of nationalism as well. We find in Wisdom an expression of Natural Theology and of Jesus Christ who is portrayed in Colossians as the first born of all creation. The effort to place God into a denominational box is antithetical to the accessibility of Wisdom, Natural Theology and Jesus the Christ.

Recent world events demonstrate the practicality and grace expected of one embodying the role of ambassador. In 2014 Caroline Kennedy was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Her father, John F. Kennedy, was nearly killed by the Japanese during World War II when one of their destroyers rammed his Navy boat, PT 109, sending the crew into the water. That was well over fifty years ago. Coverage of her

being greeted by the Japanese people demonstrates the practical nature of what she has been tasked to do. Her mission is not personal; her agenda is not subjective; and her behavior is not offensive. It was impressive to watch the Ambassador Kennedy arrive at the Imperial Palace in an ornate, horse-drawn carriage and present her credentials to Emperor Akihito. These credentials, provided to her by President Barack Obama, outline her qualifications. The formality and grace demonstrated by both Ambassador Kennedy and the Emperor Akihito did not go unnoticed by the Japanese or the American people. It was clear to this American that bridges were being mended and reconciliation was being demonstrated. Another practical demonstration of the role of an ambassador can be seen in the life of Nelson Mandela. Mandela will be remembered for many things, but his ability to integrate theory with practice has been impactful.

Authentic Relationships and Practices

The un-churched are seeking authentic spiritual conversations with those of diverse backgrounds and faiths. They generally feel in charge of their own faith and are interested in understanding what people of other faiths believe. They believe that authentic spirituality is relational and holistic. Even those individuals who are open to returning to church link their probability of returning to something relational that would need to occur. They prefer a less formal like meeting outdoors, or in small informal groups. In many of their experiences, when life events happen, the church is either unwilling or unable to help them. This has been proven out in the lives of many of these women. It is especially pronounced when experienced by them as a child. Both Trisha

and June watched a parent be rejected by the church as a child or young adult. They vividly remember these events even now as adult women. When their marriages failed, or their children went off to live their lives it seems that the church had no further use for these women. They felt forced to pursue other ways to connection to God.

Both the national and state statistics indicate that men are more likely to be un-churched than women. Thirty-two percent of the women in this research revealed that during the time they went to church, that it was just them and their children. Amber, Vera, and Beverly each took their children to church for years without their husbands. Cynthia, Rita and Vera were influenced by their new in-laws to convert to their family's denomination preference. These women took their children to church for many years in order to please their in-laws. Cynthia laughingly says that neither her husband nor her mother-in-law, who lived with them, went to church with them. It was just she and the children.

> *Field note 9:* June does not think that many of them [those in the church] really want people to come back to the church. What they want is to hear us say is that "we were wrong for leaving and that we need their help spiritually." That is the attitude they project when they find out that a person is un-churched. They are dismissive, condescending and judgmental … she has the sense she wouldn't truly be welcomed back anyways.

Small Group Development

Many of those interviewed indicate that they would prefer small discussion groups. The study suggests that the church begin to develop small group leaders who can moderate and facilitate 21st century issues. Literature providing effective resources for

small group development are being explored (Reese, 2008; George, 2013; Boren, 2007; Brown, 2006; Marquet, 2012, Smith, 2000).

Stanley and Willits use the term *authentic communities* to describe the small group environment that worked effectively for North Point Ministries. Their formula, defined as the "*ABC's of group life,"* includes *Accountability* which involves inviting other people into your life to challenge you in your priorities and relationships. These relationships obviously include your relationship with Christ, but also those with other believers and unbelievers. Accountability is followed by *belonging* which organically leads to the *connectedness* that a person feels when they are comfortable within a group of people. Providing this sense of connection is important because we live in a culture that prioritizes belonging before believing. Taking care of those like one self is a natural by-product of the formula and is not a piece that needs to be programmed.[1]

Facilitation and organization are hidden yet important aspects of effective small groups. The life of a group is cyclical and has a finite life cycle. Facilitation requires the deliberate planning and management of the group. People have different skillsets so it is possible for a group to have more than one facilitator. The group eventually ends and the members go their separate ways. This can be experienced positively or negatively by members of the group. According to Johnson and Johnson, "the more mature and cohesive the group, and the stronger the emotional bonds that have been formed among group members, the more potentially upsetting, is the termination period."[2] These types of issues should be accounted for in the developmental stage of the group.

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[1]Stanley and Willits, *Creating Community*, 105-106.

[2] David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 33.

Mega churches have also effectively used small group settings. They have found a healthy balance between large and small group dynamics. They typically congregate in the larger group on Sundays, and then the smaller groups throughout the remainder of the week. Members have the opportunity to participate in topic based groups, or groups that are age appropriate. This large and small group mixture allows for different dynamics to play out and have proven to be successful in keeping members engaged.

A Paradigm Shift

> A normal paradigm taken for granted and taught simply as "the way it is", as science or even as reality. Then, with anomalies and misfits accumulating, normal science moves into *crisis mode*. Finally, a radically alternative vision or revolutionary new model is proposed, and there occurs—often through a younger generation—a paradigm shift from the old model to the newer one, from say Ptolemy to Copernicus, Newton to Einstein….or from Temple, priest, and sacrifice to Torah, rabbi, and study.[3]

Just because something has worked in the past does not mean that it will work again. Relying on an existing heuristic can make it difficult to see alternative solutions. Human institutions generally assume that, there is a fixed or relationship of one man or group to another, or one generation to another. These institutions prepare us for stability or permanence, not for change. Examples are the child-rearing practices that families pass on generationally, the husband-wife relationship, and our schools and government which

[3] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

assume permanent relationships. They impose sanctions on any deviation from these social and cultural norms.[4]

The research suggests that the church is still operating within the same teaching and developmental paradigm as when our society was largely rural and illiterate. While today's society is urban and literate, the paradigm is still "come to, and listen to." We are still sermon-and-sanctuary-centered and as a result, we continue to gather the people who are willing to make the first move, and miss the rest.[5] The turning point will come when we stop seeing this as our church and begin to allow Christ to lead. Some have begun to notice the emergence of a new paradigm, and have begun to explore other ways to do church. In referring to the church, the New Testament uses terms like body, bride, building, family, field, house, temple, as well as an individual. These terms corporately and individually present a complex image.

Future Research

A short-coming of the research is that it is limited to women ages forty through eighty. Along the way the ethnographer has spoken to many other individuals eager to participate in the research. Engaging different age groups, males, and the gay community using the same series of questions would provide additional insights into the concerns of the un-churched. These groups would appreciate being heard.

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[4] McLoughlin, *Revival, Awakenings, and Reform,* 9.

` [5] Jim Petersen, *Church Without Walls: Moving Beyond Traditional Boundaries* (Colorado Springs, CO: NAVPRESS, 1992), 118.

The national statistics note that women forty and over are the least likely to leave their local churches. This study sheds light on what happens when women feel they are no longer connected to their local church. Many of these women feel that they have outlived their usefulness to the church. This may indicate a new trend related to the historically limited use of women in the church.

The un-churched share a unique and emerging culture. Most of the descriptors we currently use to discuss the un-churched have been created by those within the traditional church and are not favorable. The un-churched are seen through the lens of who and what they are not. There is a lot about the un-churched culture that can be understood through observation. For example there seems to be an unspoken understanding among most that they have no intention of returning to a traditional church model. Also understood but not openly communicated, is the general feelings of animosity between individuals who are churched and those who are un-churched. This animosity produces a defensiveness that is not beneficial to either group. One of the objectives of this ethnographic study has been to better understand the subculture of the un-churched, by exploring the meanings they ascribe to their personal experiences with the church, and with God. Additional research is needed in order to further develop the culture of this group.

Implications of the Research

The Bible maintains that God has not left himself without a witness among the pagans (Acts 14:17). This is advantageous to believers because it provides a ready-made platform of talking points. The ability to find common ground is the beginning of any

discussion. This makes general revelation tremendously important to those of faith who hope to impact their communities.[6] It is the lack of common ground that is isolating and unyielding. This attitude of rightness leaves very little opportunity to converse with others of different beliefs. The ambassador is in effect shutting the door to influence.

The Christian claim that theirs is the only true religion and that all others are not only wrong, but in fact evil, does not garner the acceptance it once did when our country was predominantly Christian. This attitude of rightness is perceived as arrogance. Many perceive that Christians are enemies of the very gospel of peace they claim has liberated them. It is seen as a demonstration of the very fundamentalism that Christians find so alarming in other religions and cultures.

We mistakenly believe that going into a building one or more times each week produces of faith. Many Christians hold to the belief that the narrow path discussed in Matthew 7:13-14 is symbolic of, the institutional church. They feel that the only way to God is through the gates of the institutional church. This attitude of dismissal encourages those within the walls of the institution to forget that the un-churched are people seeking to connect and to serve God and that all are needed for the coming harvest.

Joining a church does not absolve one of their responsibility to God. Not all denominations teach that believers will be judged. Some refer the believer's *"pearly gate experience"* as something other than judgment and insist that judgment is for the non-believer. Regardless of one's theology there seems to be no dispute that each of us will be held to some level of accountability. All seem to agree, at least tacitly, that Pastor will not be there. If true, this seems a bit unfair. If we are mandated by God to join a church

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[6] Budziszewski, *Written on the Heart*, 181.

designed to influence our practice, we should then be able to bring Pastor when being held accountable for that practice. One wonders what about Sister Alice will do. She has only ever done what the pastor has told her to do. Will she be able to use a lifeline to call her pastor?

Conclusion

Disciples of Christ are to indiscriminately tell people God is available to them. The good news of the gospel message is that God is not angry with humanity, and has provided a way out of our human condition, regardless of what that condition may be. To decide not to go is unscriptural. To exclude certain populations of people from the good news is also unscriptural. The church has not been tasked with excluding anyone from the gospel message. The exclusion of anyone opens the door for the exclusion of everyone. The church is not the gate-keeper of salvation because salvation belongs to God alone.

> *Field note 10:* The Michael Brown decision came down today. The civil rights marches and the angry rhetoric is familiar. It is once again a disturbing time in America. The discouragement and anger are palpable. The cognitive dissonance has resurfaced, or maybe it never really left. The church leadership is primarily silent. Clearly Black Lives Matter to God. So, we wait for God to place a call on the next Martin Luther King, Jr.

APPENDIX A

TERMINOLOGY

TERMINOLOGY

Acolytes: A young child or teen-ager who acts as an assistant to the priest during the formal procedures of Mass, and other special events.

Ambassador: An accredited diplomat sent by a nation on a mission to, or as its permanent representative in, a foreign country, or as, a representative or promoter of a specific thing.

Born-again Christian: Those who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important today. They believe they will *go to heaven* based on their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Church: Derived from the Greek meaning "that which belongs to the Lord." The Greek word most commonly used to refer to the church is *ekklesia,* from which are derived the Latin ecclesia and similar words in Romance languages—*iglesia, eglise, chiesa.* For these reason things having to do with the church are more often called "ecclesiastical," and the doctrine of the church is ecclesiology.

While always referring to the community of the faithful, the term "church" has various meanings according to the context. It often refers to the local congregation—as in "the church in Ephesus," or "the church will gather this evening." At other times it includes all believers everywhere—as in Ephesians 3:10. It is also used in the name of a particular denomination or faith community—as in The United Methodist Church, or the Roman Catholic Church. Sometimes it refers to the authoritative leadership of a particular community—as in "the church teaches that …" While these are different, there is also a relationship among them—and this is one of the themes that ecclesiology studies.

Cognitive Dissonance: An unpleasant state of tension generated when a person has two or more cognitions that are inconsistent or do not fit together.

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD): An association established for the purpose of providing religious education.

Culture: A pattern of learned, group-related perceptions—including verbal and nonverbal language, attitudes, values, belief systems and behaviors.

Ethnography: Literally meaning 'a portrait of a people' ethnography is a qualitative research method that produces a written description of a group culture. Ethnography allows for the exploration of group customs, beliefs and behavior, based on information collected through fieldwork.

Key Informant: This individual, or individuals, provide a pivotal link between the fieldworker and the community being studied. Although the ethnographer tries to speak with as many people as possible, they have traditionally relied on one or two individuals to provide valuable insights into the group being studied.

Natural Law: The law implanted in human hearts, allowing them to know what is good even apart from revelation. The principle of natural law was explored in some detail by Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), who used it to develop ethical principles that could be common to all humankind.

Natural Theology: Theology based on the natural gifts of the human mind, and on the "general revelation" granted to all rather than on a "special revelation" found in the bible.

Organizations: Are consciously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people that function on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals.

Organizational Behavior: The study of individuals and groups within an organizational context, and the study of internal processes and practice as they influence the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and organizations.

Orthodoxy: In its strictest sense refers to "correct doctrine." ... for this reason all churches consider themselves orthodox. The term is used with pejorative overtones, to describe a sort of theology that seeks to define every possible point of doctrine or belief, claiming that those who do not agree are heretics.

Paradigm: An example or pattern. Different paradigms assume different interpretations of reality, human behavior, culture, and communication.

Participant Observation: Is immersion in a culture. Ideally the ethnographer lives and works in the community learning the language, and seeing patterns of behavior over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hoes, and expectations of the people under study. Participant observation takes place in community settings or other locations believed to have some relevance to the research questions.

Postmodernity: The new age that according to some has emerged, or is emerging to the detriment of modernity. Those supporting this mindset believe that as the world becomes more pluralistic, the worldviews associated with modernity will lose its power and give way to postmodernity. These individuals are skeptical of all claims to objectivity or universality, as well as political, literary, and religious discourse that claims to represent the totality of reality, or to be free of perspectival bias.

Religious: Used in this study religion is used to denote experiences in the public realm. These experiences are inclusive of the adherence to church rituals and denominational doctrines.

Slain in the Spirit: A relatively modern expression denoting a religious phenomenon in which an individual falls down, the cause being attributed to the Holy Spirit. The phenomenon is known within modern Pentecostalism and Charismatic renewal under various names, including, "falling under the power," "overcome by the Spirit," and "resting in the Spirit."

Social influence: An area of social psychology devoted to understanding the ways in which people affect or change the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of others.

Spirituality: A term used to refer to people's subjective practices and experiences as they progress in their personal relationship with God. It is not unusual to find prayer, meditation, contemplation, and mysticism among the practices of those who consider themselves spiritual.

Un-churched: is defined as a person who has not attended a Christian church service at any time during the last six months other than special events such as weddings and funerals.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

- Doctoral Candidate/Researcher:
  Stephanie A. Wilson
  sawilson@united.edu
- Supporting Institution:
  United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio
  Faculty Mentor: Dr. Karel Hanhart
  khanhart@united.edu

Two-fold purpose of the study

1. Designed to better understand the reasons people chose not to participate in traditional or organized church activities.
2. Seeks to better understand how un-churched individuals connect spiritually to their communities and to God.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before, during, or after the interview. Note, your name will not directly be used in the research findings. Only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. The researcher will share the findings with you before the project is finalized.

I consent to having this interview tape recorded: yes ____ no ____

Demographic Information

Age: 30-40 _____ Gender: Female: _____
41-50 _____ Male: _____
51-60 _____
61-70 _____

When was the last time you attended church weekly?

Never attended weekly	____	Less than 1 year ago	____
About 1–5 years ago	____	About 5 – 10 years ago	____
About 10–15 years ago	____	Over 15 years ago	____

Name: _____

Profession: _____

Phone or Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW/QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW/QUESTIONNAIRE

Being "unchurched" for the purposes of this study is defined as not having attended church in the last six months with the exception of weddings, funerals or other special events.

1. My understanding is that you are currently un-churched.
    a. Is that correct? Yes ___ No ___

2. Tell me about your church experience.

    a. For example, did you attend church as a child… with your family … or did you begin attending church as an adult?
    b. Were you taught biblical principles as a child…did you take your children to church regularly (i.e. weekly).

3. Do you prefer a specific religious denomination?
    a. Lutheran
    b. Baptist
    c. Pentecostal
    d. Evangelical
    e. Episcopalian
    f. Don't really understand the difference
    g. Don't really care about the difference
    h. Neither understand or care about the difference

    Comments:

4. Is denominational affiliation important to you?
    0 = No: it is Not Important 10 = Yes: It is Very Important

5. Do you think that God cares about your denominational affiliation?
    0 = No: It is Not Important 10 = Yes: It is Very Important

6. Do you currently volunteer anywhere? Yes ___ No ___

7. Describe these activities:

Some of the ways people volunteer are:

a. In my community
b. Through my employer
c. By doing community arts or theater
d. By contributing to parent/teacher activities
e. Through nonprofit associations
f. By helping with boy scout or girl scout leadership
g. Being active in civic associations
h. By participating in little league activities
i. Other:

8. What did you like MOST about going to church?

9. What did you like LEAST about going to church?

a. Serving the community	Like Most ___	Like Least ___
b. Sense of belonging	Like Most ___	Like Least ___
c. Worship Service	Like Most ___	Like Least ___
d. People and Fellowship	Like Most ___	Like Least ___
e. The Message	Like Most ___	Like Least ___
f. Connecting to God	Like Most ___	Like Least ___

10. What do you consider the #1 reason you no longer attend church? (Select all that apply):

a. The people
b. The message
c. Lack of Connection
d. Scheduling Conflict
e. Takes too much time
f. Uninteresting
g. Theological concerns
h. Religion just does not make sense

Explain:

11. Is there anything else that contributes to your NOT attending church?

12. Would you consider returning to a traditional church environment?

Yes ___ No ___

Explain your thoughts:

13. Do you feel that not attending church has affected your life positively or negatively?

    Positively ___ Negatively ___

    Please try to explain this positive or negative affect.

14. Did you make an intentional decision NOT to attend church any longer?
    a. If yes, describe when and how you came to that decision?
    b. If no, explain how you came to not attend church?

15. What do you currently do to purposefully enhance your spiritual life?
    - Meditation
    - Prayer
    - Reading the bible
    - Spiritual discussions
    - Nothing currently
    - Other: Please specify:

16. Do you feel the need for additional spiritual connections?

    a. Yes ___
    b. No ___

    Explain:

17. Do you know anyone whose spiritual life you admire?

    a. Yes ___
    b. No ___

18. If YES to question #17, describe the aspects of that person's spirituality that you admire.

19. What kinds of spiritual settings would you like to see in place that would help you to grow spiritually?

20. If you had absolutely NO restrictions, how would you choose to grow yourself spiritually?

21. When thinking about some "other" church model, what comes to mind?

22. What would you consider to be an ideal church environment?

    _____

Additional Comments:

Thank you for your participation. You will be contacted with a narrative of the results for your feedback.

Stephanie A. Wilson
Doctoral Candidate, United Theological Seminary
Stephanie.A.Wilson@sbcglobal.net

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT VARIABLES

PARTICIPANT VARIABLES

Participant Name	Profession	Years Un-churched	Age Group	Race	Marital Status			Childhood Denomination	Preferred Denomination
					Parents	Participant	Current Spouse		
[redacted]	Elementary School Teacher	15+ Yrs	51 - 60	CA	Divorced	Divorced		Catholic	Christian
[redacted]	Courier/Fitness Instructor	15+ Yrs	51 - 60	AA	1st Marriage	1st Marriage	2nd Marriage	Catholic	Catholic
[redacted]	Domestic Engineer	1 Yr	51 - 60	CA	Divorced	1st Marriage	1st Marriage	Episcipalian	Baptist
[redacted]	Family Business Manager	2 Yrs	41 - 50	CA	Divorced	2nd Divorce	Outside of Marriage R.	Catholic	None
[redacted]	Self Employed Fitness Instructor	1 Yr	51 - 60	CA	Divorced	2nd Divorce	Divorced	Congregationa	None
[redacted]	Self Employed Tailor	4 Yrs	61 - 70	CA	Divorced	Divorced		Catholic	Agnostic
[redacted]	Scientist and Educator	15+ Yrs	61 - 70	AA	Divorced	Never Married		Methodist	Methodist
[redacted]	Domestic Engineer	5 Yrs	51 - 60	CA	Divorced	Divorced	Outside of Marriage R.	Catholic	None
[redacted]	Study Abroad Advisor	15+ Yrs	71 - 80	CA	Divorced	1st Marriage	1st Marriage	Episcipalian	Agnostic
[redacted]	Information Specialist	4 Yrs	61 - 70	AA	Divorced	Never Married		Catholic	None
[redacted] (CA)	Dietition	5 Yrs	51 - 60	CA	Divorced	1st Marriage	2nd Marriage	Catholic	Catholic
[redacted] (CA)	Music Teacher	7 Yrs	51 - 60	CA	1st Marriage	Divorced	No Current Relationship	Presbyterian	Catholic
[redacted] (CA)	Corrections Officer	15+ Yrs	31 - 40	AA	Divorced	Divorced	No Current Relationship	Lutheran	Baptist
[redacted] (CA)	Payroll Supervisor/ Yoga Teacher	15+ Yrs	31 - 40	CA	1st Marriage	Never Married	Outside of Marriage R.	Catholic	Catholic
[redacted] (CA)	Ret. Diversity Director	15+ Yrs	71 - 80	AA	1st Marriage	2nd Divorce		Episcipalian	Episcipalian

Race: CA: Caucasian American
AA: African American

APPENDIX E

CODE BOOK

CODE BOOK

Code	Code Descriptor
ATRI:: Age Related Event	■ Age that a certain life event occurred
ATRI:: Current Age	■ Used to note the current age of the interviewee
ATRI:: Place of Interview	■ Where the interview was held
ATRI:: Profession	■ Profession of the Interviewee
ATRI:: Years Un-churched	■ The number of years the interviewee has been un-churched by project definition
ATT:: Attended Special Events	■ Attended a special event in church
ATT:: Became Churched	■ Interviewee became churched by project definition.
ATT:: Became Un-churched	■ Interviewee became un-churched by project definition
ATT:: Church not a Priority	■ Church is not at the top of the list of priorities for this interviewee
ATT:: InVivo	■ Uses the direct language of the interviewee
ATT:: Intentionality of Non-attendance	■ How intentional was the interviewee in becoming un-churched
ATT:: Reason for Leaving	■ Number one reason no longer attends church
ATT:: Return to Traditional Church	■ Possibility that the Interviewee says would return to a traditional church

ATT:: Returned to Church	■ Interviewee returned to church
ATT:: Still attending regularly	■ Indicates that the interviewee was still attending church regularly at this time
ATT:: Teen Group	■ Attended teen group activities
CUL:: American Cultural Issues	■ Aspects of the U.S. Culture we live in.
CUL:: EXT Attitudes	■ Attitudes un-churched people notice in those who attend church
CUL:: EXT Caring Christians	■ Christians who are kind in practice and action
CUL:: EXT Image Problem	■ Refers to the church and Christians having a problem with image
CUL:: EXT Inappropriate behavior	■ Inappropriate behavior displayed by Christians
CUL:: EXT Lack of respect for others Beliefs	■ Christians lack respect for others faiths
CUL:: EXT Offensive behavior	■ Need to be non-offensive to others
CUL:: I think we are taught to look for closure, but in reality there doesn't seem to be any real closure, so we always wonder why. Colleen believes that God says. I'm changing this part of your life.	■ The need for closure
CUL:: INT Church Culture	■ Indicates a unique internal culture displayed by those

	attending traditional churches
CUL:: INT Need for Concensus	■ The churched have a need for consensus…tribal mentality
CUL:: INT Need for Conformity	■ Churched have a need for conformity
CUL:: INT Need for Tribal Mentality	■ Follow the leader model
CUL:: INT No place for her without children	■ Interviewee expresses that there is no place for her without her children
CUL:: INT Non-Confrontational	■ Church has a non-confrontational culture
CUL:: INT Relational	■ Christianity is relational
CUL:: InVivo "Put a white picket fence up."	■ Direct Quote on the culture of the church
CUL:: In Vivo "Who the hell sends their kids to Liberty University? If you value education, on any level, would you send your kid to Liberty University? She feels that the only criterion they have is that it be a Christian institution."	■ Direct Quote on Culture of the church
CUL:: Liked Least...Going to Church	■ What interviewee liked *least* about attending church
CUL:: Liked Most...Going to Church	■ What interviewee liked *most* about attending church
CUL:: Need to Follow Tribal Mentality	■ Not needing to follow others
CUL:: Pledge of Allegiance	■ Pledge of Allegiance

CUL:: Traditionally Black Institutions and Churches	■ Aspects of Traditionally Black Institutions
EMO: NEG Feeling Bored	■ Interviewee feeling bored
EMO: NEG Feeling Stifled	■ Interviewee feeling stifled.
EMO:: NEG Being Judged	■ Interviewee feeling judged
EMO:: NEG Feeling Ambiguous	■ Interviewee feeling ambiguous
EMO:: NEG Feeling Apathetic	■ Interviewee feeling apathetic
EMO:: NEG Feeling Betrayed	■ Interviewee feeling betrayed
EMO:: NEG Feeling Concerned	■ Interviewee feeling concerned
EMO:: NEG Feeling Confused	■ Interviewee feeling confusion
EMO:: NEG Feeling Discouraged	■ Interviewee feeling discouraged
EMO:: NEG Feeling Failure	■ Interviewee feeling a sense of failure
EMO:: NEG Feeling Guilty	■ Interviewee feeling guilt
EMO:: NEG Feeling Hypocrisy	■ Interviewee feeling hypocrisy
EMO:: NEG Feeling Judged	■ Interviewee feeling judged
EMO:: NEG Feeling Luke warm	■ Interviewee feeling luke-warm
EMO:: NEG Feeling Mediocre	■ Interviewee feels mediocre

EMO:: NEG Feeling Non-confrontational	■ Interviewee feeling need to be docile
EMO:: NEG Feeling Scared	■ Interviewee feeling scared
EMO:: NEG Feeling a loss	■ Interviewee feeling sense of loss
EMO:: NEG Feeling angry	■ Interviewee feeling angry
EMO:: NEG Feeling complacent	■ Interviewee feeling complacent
EMO:: NEG Feeling disconnected	■ Interviewee feeling disconnected.
EMO:: NEG Feeling disillusioned	■ Interviewee feeling disillusionment
EMO:: NEG Feeling disturbed	■ Interviewee expresses feeling disturbed by something
EMO:: NEG Feeling frustrated	■ Interviewee feeling frustrated
EMO:: NEG Feeling isolated	■ Interviewee feels isolated
EMO:: NEG Feeling: Not fitting in	■ Interviewee does not fit in
EMO:: NEG Lack of Control	■ Interviewee feeling out of control
EMO:: NEG Lack of Excellence	■ Expresses that Christians lack excellence
EMO:: NEG Lack of Honesty	■ Interviewee senses a lack of honesty
EMO:: NEG Lack of Purpose	■ Interviewee senses a lack of purpose

EMO:: NEG No Sense of Belonging	■ Interviewee has no sense of belonging
EMO:: NEG Not really into it though	■ Interviewee more of a spectator than participant
EMO:: NEG Self Righteous	■ Interviewee expresses sensing self-righteousness from Christians
EMO:: NEG Self-centered Christianity	■ Self-centeredness demonstrated by Christians
EMO:: Neg Feeling Lost	■ Interviewee feels lost
EMO:: POS Feel a Sense of Belonging	■ Notes a sense of belonging
EMO:: POS Feeling Better	■ Interviewee feels better
EMO:: POS Feeling Content	■ Interviewee feels content
EMO:: POS Feeling Happy	■ Interviewee feeling happy
EMO:: POS Feeling Holistic	■ Interviewee feels sense of being holistic
EMO:: POS Love Going to Church	■ Interviewee loved attending church
EMO:: POS Past the Guilty	■ Interviewee not lulled by feelings of guilt
EMO:: POS Sense of Belonging	■ Interviewee lacks a sense of belonging

I never found a church that I felt was representative of my beliefs. The intolerance and hatred of homosexuals was something I did not	■ Direct Quote of Interest

understand and could not believe that God would turn his back on	
IN VIVO:: Ergo, offense shows	■ Direct Quotes of Interest
INF:: Aspects of Spirituality admired	■ Aspects of spirituality admired in others
INF:: Children Incident	■ Incident with interviewee's child
INF:: Church was important to parents	■ Church is important to interviewee because it was important to one or both parents
INF:: Elizabeth Lesser	■ Person of Influence
INF:: Joseph Campbell	■ Postmodern spiritual author
INF:: Joseph Smith the founder of Mormonism	■ Founder of Mormonism
INF:: Karl Barth Quote	■ Karl Barth Quote about Universalism
INF:: Parental Influence	■ Parents spirituality or lack of spirituality impresses the interviewee
INF:: Peer Associates	■ Effects of one's peer on spirituality
INF:: Pope Francis	■ Comments about Pope Francis
INF:: Positive Spiritual Influence	■ Notes a positive spiritual experience or influence
INF:: Spouse Attends	■ Spousal attendance
INF:: Spouse did not Attend	■ Spouse did not attend church with family

INF:: Spouses Family	■ Issues with the spouse's family
LE:: Adultery	■ Incident of Adultery
LE:: Child (ren) born	■ Child was born
LE:: Current Relationship	■ Current relationship of the interviewee
LE:: Current marriage	■ Current marriage or relationship
LE:: Divorce Effects on Kids	■ How Divorce effected them as a child or their children
LE:: Divorced	■ Divorce happened directly, or to parent of interviewee
LE:: Landmark Legal Case	■ Prosecution of this abuse case led to a landmark legal decision
LE:: Life Concerns	■ Practical concerns of everyday life
LE:: Marriage	■ Interviewee married
LE:: Parent's Divorce	■ Interviewee's parents divorced
LE:: Sexual Abuse	■ Sexual abuse happened to them or to child
Most of the adults I know do not attend church. They stopped as I did, when it was not imposed by a parent. Seeing the personality conflicts among parishioners turned them off	■ Direct Quote
ORG:: Bible as a Resource	■ People who believe the bible verbatim

ORG:: Biblical Principles Taught in Church	■ Biblical principles taught to interviewee as a child in church, or that interviewee taught to their children
ORG:: Ecclesiology Defined	■ Ecclesiology defined
ORG:: Exclusivity	■ Exclusive nature of church denominations
ORG:: Excommunicated	■ Individual was kicked out of the church
ORG:: INT Lack of Growth	■ Interviewee experienced a lack of growth
ORG:: InVivo Karen also senses that their lifestyle is in conflict with their mission. She posed the following questions in quick succession. “Aren’t they supposed to be developing the skills to be able to go out	■ Problem with church message and mission
ORG:/InVivo What they’re really saying is, “You can’t get to God without them … you have to come here to talk to God, and to learn about God.”	■ Direct Quote … how to get to God
ORG:: InVivo “When we needed them the most they said bye!”	■ Direct Quote about church organization.
ORG:: Not Bible based	■ Referring to a lack of biblical structure
ORG:: Organizational Concerns	■ Issues with how the church is administered
ORG:: Other Concerns	■ Other doctrinal issues of concern

ORG:: Pastor, Minister, Priest Issues/concerns	■ Concerns with administrators
ORG:: Religious School	■ Attended religious school
ORG:: Rituals	■ Refers to rituals in the traditional church
ORG:: Role Models: "The Best"	■ Role models
ORG:: Teaching Methods	■ Teaching methods of traditional churches
ORG:: Teachings of the Church	■ Teachings of the church
PEEPS:: Deepa Chopra	■ Specific people admired
PEEPS:: Maya Angelou	■ Specific people admired
PEEPS:: Mother Teresa	■ Specific People admired
POST:: InVivo “I get it …there were all different kinds of people. They ran the gamut. I thought, yeah this works for me.”	■ In Vivo Code about Universalist church
POST:: Outside of the Box Thinking	■ The need to think differently than traditional church model
POST:: Postmodern Faith	■ Issues around the Postmodern church
POST:: Women in The Church	■ Historic issues around gender in traditional churches
POST:: Worldview	■ Describes a broad worldview of spirituality
PRAC:: Agnostic belief	■ God may exist but we do not have the ability to reach the Divine
PRAC::	■ Practical application of faith

Application/Practice

PRAC:: Biblical Principles Reinforced at Home	■ Were biblical principles reinforced as a child at home … or with their children
PRAC/ORG:: Bottom up Ministry	■ Bottom up refers to “people oriented ministries”
PRAC:: Child Rearing Resource	■ Used church as one of many tools for child rearing
PRAC:: Church Service	■ Serving in church
PRAC:: Connection to community	■ Connection to Community
PRAC:: Contributing gifts and talents	■ Using gifts and talents to serve
PRAC:: Current Practice...Purposeful Enhancement	■ Current spiritual practices of the interviewee
PRAC:: Holistic Package	■ Holistic approach to faith where one uses it to help others
PRAC:: InVivo Angela says that as she matured it became the ancillary things about church that she enjoyed most. Things like being with her peer in League activities; or participating as a junior usher. Angela explains that by then “church was the place to go because my friends were there. She felt very comfortable within her church as a whole and within her peer group specifically.	■ Direct Quote
PRAC:: InVivo Angela	■ Direct Quote about a primary

says that her mom, "Walked the walk, and talked the talk … she was the real deal." Angela learned very early that many people say they're spiritual but are not practicing that spirituality. She	spiritual influence
PRAC:: InVivo "I learned a long time ago that I can learn something from anyone, and that God talks to us all, not just a select few."	■ InVivo Code: Can learning from everyone
PRAC:: InVivo "If the church were the only way to God, I would go, but it's not."	■ InVivo Code: Church not the only way to God
PRAC:: InVivo "Just an Episcopalian who went to church." She says, "I knew about Christ, but didn't know about the acceptance of Christ."	■ Direct Quote: Before she got "born-again"
PRAC:: InVivo "The Lord is always in my heart, so I don't need to go to a church,"	■ Direct Quote
PRAC:: InVivo "They form my community of believers."	■ Direct Quote: Authentic Church
PRAC:: It took away a very important aspect to my life. My faith has always been my primary purpose and an essential	■ Effects of becoming Un-churched

aspect to my true self and personality. I enjoyed and felt motivated and obligated to serve	
PRAC:: Knowledge for the Sake of Knowledge	■ Knowledge for the sake of knowledge speaks to knowledge without any practical application. Opposite of Wisdom
PRAC:: Life Style Choices	■ Choices made by interviewee that affect how life is lived and how they are accepted into Christian environment
PRAC:: MAG Denomination = Important	■ Denomination important to interviewee
PRAC:: MAG Denomination = Not Important	■ Denominational Affiliation not important to interviewee.
PRAC:: MAG Denomination = Very Important	■ Denominational Affiliation is very important
PRAC:: Need for Spiritual Connections	■ Need or lack of need for additional spiritual connections
PRAC:: No restriction on Growth	■ How interviewee would grow if there were no restrictions
PRAC:: Not Like Jesus Christ	■ Note: This practice does not look like that of Jesus Christ.
PRAC:: Off Mission	■ Christians are off mission… i.e. to go and talk to people about God
PRAC:: Parable Connections	■ Use of parables to connect to events in practice
PRAC:: Positive Development	■ Growth in faith

PRAC:: Powerful define God	■ Political structure of power
PRAC:: Religious vs. Spiritual	■ Difference between being "spiritual" as opposed to being "religious"
PRAC:: Searching for God	■ Describes a period when the interviewee went searching for God
PRAC:: Seeking	■ Describes a period of seeking God
PRAC:: Spiritual Growth	■ Refers to spiritual growth
PRAC:: That it is as I think it should be, it is constant, all the time, and totally integrated into their being; i.e., they use it all the time without effort; seems almost organic.	■ Facets of spirituality admired in others
PRAC:: Teachable Moments	■ A time when theory and practice came together
PRAC:: The Nones	■ Information about the "nones" or unaffiliated
PRAC:: There didn't seem to be any real substance to what was being taught in church. She admits, "After a time it all, coalesced into a grey mush of nothingness."	■ Interviewee describes the process of her detachment from religion.
PRAC:: These people represent Christ.	■ Church representing God
PRAC:: Voluntary Work	■ Describes voluntary work the interviewee does or has done
SET:: Authentic Settings	■ Spiritual settings or discussions authentic or real

	to interviewee
SET:: Church models	■ Other models or ways to “do church”
SET:: Church without Borders	■ Used to describe unusual models of church
SET:: Ideal Church Environment	■ Describes what the interviewee considers to be an “ideal spiritual environment”
SET:: Lack of Authentic Settings	■ What is an authentic setting
SET:: Sharing Environment	■ Types of spiritual environments
SET:: Spiritual Settings	■ Indicates a spiritual setting liked or disliked by the interviewee
TACIT:: Knowledge	■ Unspoken knowledge
TACIT:: Something Changed	■ Describes something intangible that happened

APPENDIX F

PANEL OF ASSOCIATES

PANEL OF ASSOCIATES

This panel of Associates embodies a broad range of perspectives, skill-sets, and expertise. They represent a diversity of skills that will benefit this Doctor of Ministry Project.

Professional Associates

D[redacted] C[redacted] has earned a Ph.D. in Sociology. Dr. C[redacted] has been helpful in the formation of the Research Proposal. Dr. C[redacted] is un-churched.

F[redacted] L. G[redacted] has earned a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Protozoology. Dr. G[redacted] us un-churched and has been essential in helping the researcher to understand the terminology contained in the Research Proposal. She has also assisted in designing the two instruments that the groups will answer.

Karel Hanhart has earned a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) from United Theological Seminary. As the mentor for this project Dr. Hanhart has continued to provide his invaluable insights.

A[redacted] H[redacted] has earned a Ph.D. in Behavioral Science. Dr. H[redacted] is an excellent academic writer and has been extremely helpful and willing to share this expertise. A[redacted] is also Jewish and brings that perspective to the Project. Dr. A[redacted] does not attend synagogue.

Context Associates

The project also has seven Context Associates who represent a diversity of perspectives, skill-sets, and expertise. Each Associate was given the project papers in early October 2013. Context Associates included:

A[redacted] J[redacted] is a pastor in Burkina Faso, West Africa. Brother Joseph also runs Victory Bible Training Center in Burkina Faso.

L[redacted] J[redacted] is a Payroll Supervisor at the University of Connecticut and a Yoga Teacher. She is un-churched.

S[redacted] L[redacted] D[redacted] is a retired Affirmative Action Director for the State of Connecticut. She is un-churched.

A[redacted] M[redacted] is a middle school music teacher. She is a member of Jazzercise, and participates in the Monday night small group. A[redacted] is un-churched.

A[redacted] M[redacted] is a nutritionist at Windham Hospital in Willimantic, CT. She is un-churched. A[redacted] is also a Jazzercise member, and participates in the Monday night small group.

J[redacted] T[redacted] is currently in graduate school and works within the Connecticut Prison system as a Parole Officer. She is un-churched.

S[redacted] W[redacted] is the Director of the Center for Academic Programs at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, CT. She is currently in a leadership position at the First Cathedral Church in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

Peer Associate

Michael Henry is the Peer Associate for this thesis. Mr. Henry is a pastor and a candidate for the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary.

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